This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

https://books.google.com

~~Inv. 1111. 24~~
Cap. 45 2. j. 5

Digitized by Google

WILLIAM BUCKLEY,

THE

WILD WHITE MAN,

AND

HIS PORT PHILLIP BLACK FRIENDS.

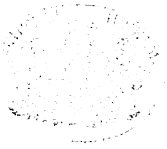
By JAMES BONWICK;

AUTHOR OF "GEOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND;"
"DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT OF PORT PHILLIP," &c., &c.

MELBOURNE:
GEO. NICHOLS, COLLINS STREET, WEST.

1856.

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

THE object of the present work is rather to present the Blacks as they were than as they are. For this purpose, documents of an ancient colonial date have been consulted, and the experience of the first settlers has been related.

The Author has to express his deep sense of obligation to the kindness and public spirit of Mr. John Helder Wedge of Tasmania, Mr. McMillan of Gipps Land, Dr. Thomson of Geelong, and other esteemed fellow colonists, for their valuable information.

The floating tales of the early days, unless now collected, will soon be forgotten, or lapse into fabled traditions. The Author has been the fortunate means of preserving some interesting reminiscences of the primitive days of Port Phillip, and the savage state of the Aborigines. Having been equally successful in obtaining reliable accounts of the poor Tasmanians, he hopes to lay their sad story before the Australian Public.

It is fitting that our youth be acquainted with the annals of their own homes, and that their sympathies be excited for the race that dwelt in the land before them.

JAMES BONWICK.

October 13th, 1856.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

PAGE

Buckley, the Wild White Man ... 7
The Wild White Man's Port Phillip Black Friends ...

Lieutenant Tuckey's Narrative ... 23
The French and the Blacks in 1803 ... 24
Sturt and the Murray Blacks in 1830 ... 25
Major Mitchell and the Blacks in 1836 ... 30
The Association and the Blacks ... 31
Mr. Batman and the Blacks ... 34
Mr. Wedge and the Blacks in 1835 ... 35
The First Overlander and the Blacks ... 41
Count Strzlecki and the Gipps Land Blacks ... 42
Mr. McMillan and the Wild Gipps Land Natives ... 44
The Wild Blacks of Lake Hindmarsh ... 46
Physical Appearance and character of the Port Phillip Blacks ... 47
Clothing, Ornaments, and Tenements ... 49
Food and Cooking ... 50
Hunting ... 52
Songs and Dances ... 53
Women and Children ... 62
Marriages ... 64
Infanticide and Cannibalism ... 68
Weapons ... 71
Religion and Missions ... 72
Superstitions ... 76
Diseases ... 81
Death and Burial ... 83
Language ... 85
Origin of the Natives ... 87
Conflicts of Whites and Blacks ... 88
Native Rights and British Rule ... 91
Protectors and Native Police ... 92
Sketches of Native Character ... 93
Civilization and Decline ... 95

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION.

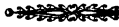
Not long ago we visited a small party of aborigines camping near our house. There were four or five; old Jemmy, his lubra Mary, an adopted child, and their friend Simon. They had just returned from Melbourne, laden with packets of sugar, tea, loaves of bread, meat, sardines, &c. The men were clad in European fashion, though without boots and hats. The woman had some under garments, but the dirty blanket enveloped all. The little girl had only the piece of a blanket. Simon was preparing his supper at the fire. Jemmy was drunk, and quarrelling with his wife. The child was crying on the damp ground. The poor young half-caste was motherless; her reckless father might, for ought we know, be still tending sheep on the plains, or standing behind a counter in Melbourne.

The dispute which had lulled at our entrance, was soon resumed in angry earnestness. We found out it was a family quarrel. Oaths and opprobrious epithets, wanting in his own language, the old man borrowed from the classic tongue of the English. Taking us privately aside, he recounted to us a narrative of wrongs, such as few husbands are called upon to endure. The lady utterly denied everything, and charged her spouse with conjugal improprieties, of which he frankly and voluntarily acknowleged the truth, alleging such to be no excuse for her faults. But as she evidently had the best of the argument, a fire stick was applied to her head to induce sounder convictions. This produced retaliations of so active a nature that we were compelled to interfere, and forcibly hold the avenging arm, while the screaming woman fled into the darkness.

Digitized by Google

Such was the exhibition of native domestic life, and such the march of improvement from a contact with the civilized white man! In the meantime, Simon sat silently and stoically by the fire. He was one who had seen Batman at his first celebrated conference with the aborigines. His father Jagajaga was an influential and faithful friend to the then humble minded, weak, and smiling whites. As the last of his family, he now wandered a stranger in the land of his forefathers. He was ill, melancholy, and without hope. He told us that there was not a black child in his tribe; adding in a sad tone, "All black fellow go away."

We desired to gather a few records of their history, especially as they were when the friends of the Wild White Man, and tell the tale to those who show the title deed of lands, for which no adequate return has been given to the right owner, in the faint hope that some justice and kindness will be meted out to the few that remain. There is no shadow of hope of perpetuating the race, or of inducing them to adopt our civilized pursuits. But we may supply their wants, provide them with shelter and attendance when sick, shield them from the brutal licentiousness of their white neighbours, and preserve them from their arch enemy,—*strong drink.*



Digitized by Google

WILLIAM BUCKLEY, THE WILD WHITE MAN.

HAVING before alluded to this wonderful character, in the "History and Settlement of Port Phillip," we propose now to pursue the subject more in detail, and allow parties to speak for themselves concerning him.

A work appeared a few years ago in Hobart Town, purporting to be written by Buckley himself, or at his dictation, and edited by Lieutenant Morgan, a veteran and esteemed member of the Tasmanian Press. But there are weighty reasons of objection to its authenticity. All those with whom we have consulted, who knew Buckley both in Port Phillip and in Hobart Town, repudiate the book. They all agree in saying that he was so dull and reserved, that it was impossible to get any connected or reliable information from him. When Governor Bourke saw him in 1837, he could make nothing of him. A few monosyllabic replies only could be obtained. Captain Lonsdale, to whose regiment he was formerly attached, vainly sought some knowledge of his career. Mr. Fawkner styled him "a mindless lump of matter." Mr. George Arden, the earliest writer on the colony says, "His extreme reserve renders it almost impossible to learn anything from him of his past life, or of his acquaintance with the aborigines." Captain Stokes, the Australian voyager, observes of him: "His intellect, if he ever possessed much, had almost entirely deserted him, and nothing of any value could be procured from him respecting the history and manners of the tribe with whom he had so long dwelt." We lived for seven years in the same Town with Buckley, almost daily seeing his gigantic figure slowly pacing along the middle of the road, with his eyes vacantly fixed upon some object before him, never turning his head to either side or saluting a passer by. He seemed as one not belonging to our world. Not being divested of curiosity, we often endeavoured to

Digitized by Google

gain from some one of his acquaintances a little narrative of that savage life, but utterly failed in doing so. Several newspaper folks tried repeatedly to worm a little out of him, through the agency of the steamy vapour of the punchbowl; but though his eye might glisten a trifle, his tongue was sealed.

Admitting the work to be apocryphal, Mr. Morgan evidently took pains to gather the best of information concerning the man, and as such we will take it as an authority for the leading facts of his history.

Born about 1780 in Macclesfield, Cheshire, Buckley was apprenticed to a bricklayer. Ten guineas bounty brought him into the Cheshire Militia, from which he was draughted into the 4th or King's Own regiment. We next learn, "implicated in an affair which rendered me liable to punishment, &c." It is added,—"As the laws were strangely administered in those days, when soldiers and sailors were concerned, I do not know to this hour the precise character or extent of my sentence." He arrived at Port Phillip a prisoner with Colonel Collins' party in October, 1803. When it was resolved to remove this penal settlement to the banks of the Derwent, Buckley made his escape to the bush, with three others; one of these was shot by the constable. Rounding the Head of the Bay over the Yarra Yarra, our intelligent hero had some dim vision of reaching Sydney; and for this purpose he travelled southward, and coasted the westward shore of Port Phillip. Oppressed with hunger and a sense of loneliness, the Englishmen made fires to attract the notice of the camp on the other side, but without success. The two prisoners left their companion to walk back and surrender themselves; but they were never seen again.

Alone in this wild country, William Buckley found a cavern near the beach, and subsisted for months upon shell-fish. He unhappily lost his fire-stick, and was deprived of the means of cooking. At length he was discovered by some natives when asleep. "After seeing both my hands, they struck their breasts and mine too, making a whine." They very reluctantly relinquished an attempt upon his stockings, and then left him. He removed his quarters. Then two women saw him, and went to

Digitized by Google

tell their husbands. A similar ceremony of beating the breasts took place. Subsequently the tribe made an important discovery, that he was the risen body of their deceased friend Murrangurk. They expressed their joy or grief, or both by "beating their breasts and heads with their clubs, the women tearing off their own hair by handsfull." His inability to talk with them was not surprising, "my having been made white after death, in their opinion, having made me foolish." He lived many years with those worthy people, until his supposed brothers and other relations were killed and eaten by their enemies. Then, disgusted with the race, he retired with his two adopted children, a blind boy and his sister; the former, however, was soon murdered and devoured, as an expiation for the supposed crime of a native dying in Buckley's hut. After the marriage and departure of his adopted daughter, he was again a solitary man until joined by a young woman, who preferred his society to that of her tribe. His previous legal marriage is thus described by Buckley's editor:—

"And now, reader, I come to a very important period of my life, which was a decision arrived at by my friends that I should take unto myself a wife. I was not in any way consulted, being considered a sort of instrument in their hands to do with as they might think proper. My wife was a young widow about twenty years of age, tolerably good looking after a fashion, and apparently very mild tempered. The marriage feast, the ring, the fees for the ceremony, the bride's dress, my own, and all the rest of it, did not cost much. I was not obliged to run in debt, or fork out every shilling, or pay fifty per cent. for discounting a bill to pay the piper, nothing of the kind; so I took her to myself, to my turf and bark hunting and fishing hut, on the banks of the Karaaf River. I should here mention, that although previously married, my wife did not present me on the day of our union, with any tender little remembrances of her first husband, my predecessor in her affections! we shall see more about that presently; but, perhaps I may as well say at once, that my dearly beloved played me most abominably false, for at the end of our honeymoon, (perhaps it might have been a few months after *that* moon had gone down,) one evening when we were alone in our hut,

Digitized by Google

enjoying our domestic felicity, several men came in and took her away from me by force ; she, however, going very willingly. The next day, as I had no supreme court to go to for damages, I went over to the tribe the intruders belonged to, and told them how I had been treated. I confess I did not make a very great fuss about my loss, if it was one, but endeavoured to whistle it down the wind gaily. Several of the friendly natives were anxious I should take the usual revenge upon her and the man she had left me to live with, but I refused, and in the end, she was speared by another man, with whom she had been coquetting, and to whom she had also played falsely."

On two occasions he nearly renewed acquaintance with white men. A vessel rode into the harbour. While the crew were on shore, some of the natives swam to the ship, and stole several articles. The Europeans on their return noticed their loss, and sailed away immediately ; Buckley vainly attempted to attract their attention. Another time a boat was stranded. Its inmates, two sailors, were kindly treated, though afterwards murdered by the Yarra tribe. The natives told him that once a vessel arrived in the Bay, and two men were tied to a tree and shot. The period of his deliverance was near. One day when upon Indented Head, he met two aborigines with coloured handkerchiefs at the end of their spears, and learned the news of the presence of three white men and six strange blacks. These were the persons Mr. Batman, the founder of Port Phillip Colony, left behind him in June, 1835. The two natives furthermore told Buckley, that "they were in search of another tribe, to enable those left behind to murder the white people the more easily, and by so doing to get possession of their property." The white blood of the man was aroused at this recital, and he walked 15 miles to save his countrymen. The narrative is thus given by Mr. Morgan :—

"Whilst sitting in deep thought musing over all these matters, I saw one of the white men take a bucket and go with it to a well some way off, and when he had left it with his load, I went there also, in order to gradually recover my senses, and act upon my ultimate determination, whatever it might be.

"From the well I had a good view of all about me, and observed

Digitized by Google

that the natives had pitched their tents near those of the white men; the former being seated round their fires, evidently in great excitement. Presently some of the natives saw me, and turning round, pointed me out to one of the white people, and seeing they had done so, I walked away from the well, up to their place, and seated myself there, having my spears and other war and hunting implements between my legs. The white men could not make me out; my half-cast colour, and extraordinary height and figure—dressed or rather undressed as I was, completely confounded them as to my real character. At length one of them came up and asked me some questions which I could not understand; but when he offered me bread, calling it by its name, a cloud appeared to pass from over my brain, and I soon repeated that and other English words after him. Somehow or other I soon made myself understood to them as not being a native-born, and so the white men took me to their tents, and clothed me, giving me biscuit, tea and meat; and they were, indeed, all very kind in every way. My sensations I cannot describe; and, as I could not explain them in my mother tongue, I showed the initials W. B. on one of my arms, by which they began readily to sympathize and look upon me as a long lost cast-away seaman, and treated me accordingly, by giving me well cooked food, shelter and raiment. Word by word I began to comprehend what they said, and soon understood as if by instinct, that they intended to remain in the country; that they had seen several of the native chiefs, with whom, as they said, they had exchanged all sorts of things for land."

Batman's Association engaged Buckley as a sort of Interpreter at a salary of £50, and Mr. Gellibrand furnished him with a horse. His business was to forward friendly intercourse between the Whites and Blacks. Capt. Lonsdale placed him on the staff of constables June 4th, 1836. Before this, however, he had obtained a free pardon from Colonel Arthur, August 25th, 1835, through the kind intercession of Messrs. Batman and Wedge. He left Port Phillip for Hobart Town soon after the coming of Capt. Lonsdale. The following is the reason assigned for his departure;—"Finding some persons were continually throwing

Digitized by Google

difficulties in the way of my interests, and not knowing what might be the result, I determined on resigning office, and on leaving a Colony where my services were so little known and so badly appreciated by the principal authorities." The truth of it was, that he was seen to be thoroughly useless. When we had first the honor of his acquaintance, in 1841, he was a sort of constable at the Female Factory in Liverpool Street, Hobart Town. He had just before married the widow of an emigrant. It was amusing to see the two walking together; the lady could just reach up her fingers to lay hold of his arm, and seldom was a word exchanged between them. He had a pension of £12 from the Tasmanian Government, and £40 from ours. While being driven out in a gig in January, 1856, he was forcibly thrown out, and severely injured. After every attention to his case, he departed this life; he was buried on February 2nd, 1856.

There is diversity of opinions about this history. Mr. Fawkner and others charge the man with connivance with the natives in stealing sheep, and killing shepherds. It is certain that he took no steps to conciliate either party; but we believe this arose more from his indifference and sullen apathy, than from active sympathy with his black friends. The man who could live with a wild tribe for thirty two years, without an attempt to elevate that people in the smallest degree, was not one to act as a Protector of the Aborigines. An old colonist assured us that he heard him say, that he wished the whites had never come. Poor Simon, the son of Jagga Jagga, gave us the other day his people's version of the Buckley story. He never had connection with the other tribe, and Simon's account was a traditionary one. The strange man was found sleeping under a tree. For some time he would not eat. He could speak the Blacks' language. The tribe gathered round, knew him to be their returned brother, and cried much over him. Simon furthermore states that he knew a son of Buckley's, with "plenty one big beard, all the same me." The Wild White Man always said that he never had a child of his own. Several living parties attest to the knowledge of his children.

We close our description of this incomprehensible but highly

Digitized by Google

interesting individual, by a recital of John Helder Wedge, Esq., M.L.C., of Tasmania, and one of the most active of Batman's Port Phillip Association. The document was furnished to the Home Government by Colonel Arthur in 1836, and then forwarded for insertion in the Royal Geographical Society's Journal.

"A short time," writes Mr. Wedge, "previous to the abandonment of the settlement by Colonel Collins, he absconded with two other men, named Marmon and Pye; the latter left his companions before they reached the river at the northern extremity of the Port, being exhausted with the want of food and other privations. Marmon remained with Buckley till they had wandered nearly round the Port, but left him somewhere on Indented Head, with the intention of returning to the establishment; but neither he nor Pye was never heard of afterwards. Buckley thus alone continued his wanderings along the beach, and completed the circuit of the Port; he at last became weary of such a very precarious existence, and determined upon returning. Soon after he had reached on his return back the neighbourhood of Indented Head, he fell in with the family of natives with whom he continued to live till the 12th of July, 1835, the day on which he joined the party left by Mr. Batman.

"His memory fails him as to dates, but he supposes his falling in with the natives to have occurred about twelve months after his leaving the establishment. The natives received him with great kindness; he soon attached himself to the chief named Nullaboin, and accompanied him in all his wanderings. From the time of his being abandoned by his companions till his final return to the establishment, a period of thirty-three years, he had not seen a white man. For the first few years his mind and time were fully occupied in guarding against the treachery of strange Indians, and in procuring food; he, however, soon acquired a perfect knowledge of the language, adopted the native habits, and became quite as one of the community. The natives gave him a wife, but discovering that she had a preference for another, he relinquished her; though the woman and her paramour forfeited their lives, having violated the custom which prevails among them; for, when a woman is promised as a wife, which

Digitized by Google

generally happens as soon as she is born, it is considered a most binding engagement, the forfeiture is visited with the most summary vengeance. Buckley has had no children either legitimate or illegitimate; during the whole time of his residence his adventures here have been devoid of any remarkable interest, having passed nearly the whole of his time in the vicinity of Indented Head, excepting only upon one occasion, when he travelled about 150 miles to the westward of Port Phillip.

"He describes the natives as cannibals, rude and barbarous in their customs, but well disposed towards the white man. He was unable to introduce among them any essential improvements, feeling that his safety chiefly depended on his conforming exactly to all their habits and customs. Although he was always anxious to return to civilized life, he had for many years abandoned all hopes of so doing. The following circumstance, however, eventually restored him to his countrymen. Two natives residing at the establishment left by Mr. Batman had stolen an axe, and having by others been assured that the theft would be severely punished, they absconded, and eventually fell in with Buckley, communicated to him the fact of white men being in the neighbourhood, and their reason for running away; also saying that they would procure other natives, and return and spear the white men. Buckley succeeded in dissuading them from this outrage, and proceeded in search of Mr. Batman's party, and in two days succeeded in joining them. The Europeans were living in a miserable hut, with several native families encamped around them. On being observed, Buckley caused great surprize, and indeed some alarm; his gigantic stature, his height being nearly six feet six inches, enveloped in a kangaroo skin rug: his long beard and hair of thirty three years growth, together with his spears, shields and clubs, it may readily be supposed presented a most extraordinary appearance. The Europeans believed him to be some great chief, and were in no little trepidation as to his intentions being friendly or not. Buckley proceeded at once to the encampments, and seated himself among the natives, taking no notice of the white men, who, however, quickly detected, to their great astonishment, the features of an European; and after considerable difficulty, succeeded in

Digitized by Google

learning who he was. He could not in the least express himself in English; but after the lapse of ten or twelve days, he was enabled to speak with tolerable fluency, though he frequently inadvertently used the language of the natives. The family with whom Buckley so long resided were greatly attached to him, and bitterly lamented his leaving them. He resides at present at the settlement formed by the gentlemen who have associated to form a new colony, through the means of the friendly interest which has been here established. He expresses his intention of remaining at present, for the purpose of being the medium of communication with the natives. On his receiving the conditional pardon which his Excellency the Governor most humanely and promptly forwarded to him, on his case being made known, and hearing of the meritorious assistance he had afforded the settlers, he was most deeply affected; and nothing could exceed the joy he evinced at once more feeling himself a free man, received again within the pale of civilized society."

Mr. Wedge, having recently most generously and courteously furnished us with important, official and private, information about Buckley, especially in relation to correspondence respecting his Free Pardon, we gladly give to the public a selection from this literary treasure.

Referring to Marmon, the runaway companion of Buckley's, Mr. Wedge observes: "From what he has since told me, I believe he was mistaken in this name." Although it had been stated that the Wild White Man had had no children, Mr. Wedge adds, "He has since pointed out to me a woman that he says is his daughter." In explaining further the contemplated attack upon the eight men left behind by Batman, our informant writes, "Buckley dissuaded them from making the attempt, stating that there were a great many white men where they came from, and that if any of the white men were killed, numbers would come, and kill every black man they could find. Thus intimidated, they abandoned their intentions." In his description of the first visit to the New Country, we have the following sketch: "On one occasion Buckley accompanied me on an excursion for a week, during which we fell in with the family he had lived with. If I had any doubts as to

Digitized by Google

the fact of his never having seen a white man during his residence with the natives, (and I confess, knowing that the sealers were in the habit of sometimes visiting this part of the coast, I was not without them at first,) they were now entirely removed. Nullaboin and his family had never seen a white man with the exception of Buckley, till he saw me. He received and examined me with great curiosity, opening my waistcoat and shirt to see whether the whole of my body was white." But subsequently the memory of the slow man returned, and he gave another version. With the monotony of scene and life among his Black Friends for the long period of thirty years, we would fain excuse this lapse of intellect, especially from a knowledge of the man's mental infirmities. We subjoin Mr. Wedge's statement:

"During a ride with Buckley on my second visit to Port Phillip, he corrected his former statement of never having seen a white man during his residence with the natives. He stated that on one occasion a small craft was in the Port, not far from its entrance. He was on the Peninsula on the eastern side of Swan Bay, on Indented Head, when a boat from the craft with three or four men in it put on shore, I think I understood him, for the purpose of burying one of their companions. He watched them unobserved for some time till they were about returning to their vessel, when he made his appearance, and intimated his wish, by repeating the few words of English that he could remember at the moment, to accompany them. They probably mistook him for a native, as they might do from his long beard, hair, spears, &c., and being habitted in his opossum rug, and took no heed of him. On the following morning they came again on shore and coo-eyed, (i.e. called out) as he supposes for the purpose of his again making his appearance. But he had changed his mind, suspecting them of treachery, and remained concealed amongst the trees and shrubs on the Peninsula. This was the only time he had seen a white man, and as he had no intercourse with them, the circumstance might not occur to him when he joined our party."

The interesting documents connected with the pardon of Buckley are now appended, and furnish the most lucid and faithful account of this marvellous person.

Digitized by Google

"The Humble Petition of Willlam Buckley, to His Excellency Colonel George Arthur, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, sheweth—

"That your Petitioner was a private in the Cheshire Supplementary Militia about two years, when he volunteered into the 4th Regiment of Foot, or King's Own, of which regiment he was attached to the third Batallion, and continued therein between two and three years, during which time he accompanied that regiment in the expedition to Holland.

"That your Petitioner was afterwards convicted of receiving stolen property, and was transported for life.

"That your Petitioner arrived at Port Phillip, New Holland, about thirty years ago, and on the breaking up of the establishment your petitioner with two others, (the name of one of whom was William Marmon) absconded and subsisted on the sea coast for about twelve months, when he fell in with a family of natives, with whom he has continued up to the present time. That your Petitioner has at various times, suffered great privations from the want of food.

"That your Petitioner, previously to his joining the natives, returned to Port Phillip, with the intention of surrendering himself to the authorities, but was prevented from doing so by the departure of the establishment.

"That your Petitioner has never seen a white man since that period, until he came to the establishment formed by Mr. Batman, Mr. Wedge, and other gentlemen, on the — July, 1835.

"That your Petitioner, two days previously to joining the establishment, learnt from two natives that white men were in the neighbourhood, and that they with others intended to spear them, for the sake of the plunder they would get.

'That your Petitioner remonstrated with them, and dissuaded them from their intentions; that your Petitioner has ever since exerted himself and has succeeded in convincing them of the friendly disposition of the white men towards the natives.

"That your Petitioner will continue to do all in his power to render permanent the good understanding that has been established, for which services your Petitioner humbly prays for the indulgence of a Free Pardon, and your Petitioner will ever pray."

Digitized by Google

Letter from Mr. Wedge, at Port Phillip, to the Colonial Secretary, accompanying the petition :

" Sir,—In reference to the petition of William Buckley for a free pardon, which I have the honor to transmit herewith, I beg to bear testimony to the essential service he has rendered in becoming the means of communication with the natives, and I have no hesitation in saying that through him there is every probability of making permanent the friendly intercourse that was commenced by Mr. Batman in his recent excursion (already detailed by that gentleman to the government) with the Aborigines ; and from the fact of his having saved the lives of the eight men who were left here by Mr. Batman, together with the circumstance of his having made a voluntary offer of becoming in future the medium of communication with the Aborigines. I beg most earnestly to recommend his petition to the favorable consideration of His Excellency the Lieuteuant-Governor ; and in doing so, I feel that I scarcely need advert to the danger that would ensue to the lives of those who may in future reside here, by his being driven to despair by the refusal of his petition, which would probably induce him to join the natives again ; and in which event there is no calculating on the mischief that might ensue by the hostile feelings that he would have it in his power to instil into the breasts of the natives. I doubt not, as an act of humanity toward those who may come to sojourn in this settlement, the above circumstance will have weight in the consideration His Excellency will bestow on the prayer of the petition. If I might be allowed, I would respectfully suggest that it should at once be conceded to him, and his free pardon sent by the next vessel that will be despatched to this place. Buckley is a most interesting character ; from his long residence amongst the natives, he has acquired a great influence over them, as well as all their habits and language ; in fact, he had nearly forgot his native tongue, and it was some days before he could express himself in it. The two men who absconded with him left him before he joined the natives ; and he has never heard of them since ; he supposes they were killed by them. Buckley is gigantic in size, measuring six feet five inches and seven-eighths without shoes, and of good proportions ; and I have no doubt he is

Digitized by Google

indebted for his life to his ferocious appearance. From the circumstance of his having been obliged to direct the whole of his attention to self-preservation, and to procuring food for subsistence, his memory has almost altogether failed him as to time and events which occurred previous to his leaving England. He forgets the name of the vessel he came in, as well as that of the Captain, and the Commandant of the Settlement. From his information, the natives are in the lowest grade of ignorance, having no idea of a Supreme Being; and although I have had but a short intercourse with them, I am inclined to give credence to his statement, and I have acquired sufficient confidence in them to trust myself amongst them in excursions into the interior. I went about twelve miles with them yesterday.

"I have, &c.,

"JNO. H. WEDGE.

"To Captain Montagu,

"Colonial Secretary."

Then follows the usual prison description of his person:

Description of William Buckley:—

Height, without shoes, six feet five inches and seven-eights.
Age, Fifty-three.
Trade, Bricklayer.
Complexion, Brown.
Head, Round.
Hair, Dark Brown.
Visage, Round, and marked with small pox.
Forehead, Low.
Eyebrows, Bushy.
Eyes, Hazel.
Nose, Pointed and turned up.
Native Place, Marton, near Macclesfield, Cheshire.

Remarks:—Well proportioned, with an erect military gait; Mermaid on upper part of right arm. Sun, half moon, seven stars, monkey. W. B. on lower part of right arm.

JNO. H. W.

Digitized by Google

To this appeal from Port Phillip there came a prompt and favourable reply from Governor Arthur.

"Van Diemen's Land,

"Colonial Secretary's Office,

"25th August, 1835.

"Sir,—Having submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor your letter of the 9th of July last, enclosing a Petition from William Buckley, a runaway convict recently discovered at Port Phiilip, after having been for some years domesticated with the natives of that part of the Coast of New Holland; and His Excellency having considered the subject of your representation of this man's conduct and the services he has rendered in promoting a friendly disposition between the Aborigines with whom he has been so long time associated, and the whites who have recently visited the coast of New Holland, I am directed to aequaint you, that the Lieutenant-Governor is doubtful how far he is authorised to grant a free pardon to William Buckley, as he is not within the jurisdiction of this government, but His Excellency has notwithstanding acquiesced in the preparation of the usual instrument, in the hope, that from considerations of policy, the indulgence will be aeceded to by His Majesty's government.

"I am further desired to inform you that the Lieutenant-Governor's compliance with your request in this case, is founded upon a desire to prevent bloodshed, and with a view to remove any inducement on Buckley's part to make common cause with the natives in the commission of any outrages upon the White Immigrants, which might lay the foundation of a war of extermination, and His Excellency also entertains the sanguine expectation, that if this man's energies and influence be well directed, the Aborigines may be so thoroughly conciliated as to ensure a lasting amity between them and the present or any future Immigrants to that part of the coast of New Holland.

"I am further to signify the desire of His Excellency, tnat it may be distinctly understood, that the reasons stated in this letter, form the only grounds for the present concession which must not be

Digitized by Google

construed into the admission of any claim made by the gentlemen associated with Mr. Batman to the Territory at Port Phillip or any part thereof.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your very obedient servant,
JOHN MONTAGU."

Mr. Wedge, as in duty bound, acknowledged this favor, although he did not do so until his return to his Tasmanian home, at Leighland, near Ross.

Leighland, 15th October, 1835.

" Sir,—I had the honor of receiving your letter, accompanied with the free pardon for William Buckley, which was forwarded to me at Port Phillip.

" In acknowledging the receipt of them, I beg to express the obligations I am under for the humane and prompt attention paid by the Lieutenant Governor, to my representation of Buckley's case; and I was especially directed by him to convey his thanks to His Excellency for his Free Pardon, and also his assurance that he will do all in his power to perpetuate the friendly understanding with the natives that was so fortunately established through the treaty effected by Mr. Batman in last June, and it is with much satisfaction that I can state from the observations I had an opportunity of making, whilst residing amongst them, that there is every chance of a continuance of the good understanding, provided a proper system be observed in our future intercourse."

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
JNO. H. WEDGE."

Digitized by Google

THE WILD WHITE MAN'S PORT PHILLIP BLACK FRIENDS.

Buckley ran away from the English Penal Settlement of Port Phillip at the end of December, 1803; that establishment being removed to the banks of the Derwent, in Van Diemen's Land, a few weeks after his flight. The tribe with whom he found favour, and dwelt for so many years, lived on that coast of the Bay opposite to the prisoners' establishment, and had no association with the Whites; from the hostility of the native communities, the Geelong men were not likely even to hear of the arrival of these curious strangers. It was otherwise with the Port Phillip Bay Blacks, whose hunting grounds extended eastward as well as northward of the Port, and who could not avoid knowledge of their wonderful neighbours. We have two sources of information respecting this intercourse; the journal of the Rev. Robert Knopwood, Chaplain to the Settlement, and afterwards the first Chaplain of Hobart Town; and the published work of Lieutenant J. H. Tuckey, of the *Calcutta*, the vessel that brought Governor Collins out to this Colony in 1803.

The notices of our Black Friends by the Clergyman are these:— October 10. "Three natives came to us, and were very friendly." October 22. On that day is entered the intelligence of Gammon and Harris being beset by Blacks, and calling upon Lieut. Tuckey to fire. Upon firing over their heads, they all dispersed. But the Chief returned, ornamented with a turban crown. Fresh provocations being received, a charge was made. We quote the journal: "Mr. Tuckey fired over them a second time, at which they again retired a short distance. They were in great numbers, and all armed. Finding that none of their party were wounded by the firing, they again advanced; but when one of them was about to throw his spear at Mr. Tuckey, he gave orders to shoot him as an example. Our people fired, and killed him, and another was wounded; on which they all fled. Had not Mr. Tuckey fortunately come up with his boat, there is no doubt but that they would have killed Mr. Gammon and Mr. Harris and their two men, and perhaps have eaten them, for there is great reason to believe they are cannibals."

Digitized by Google

LIEUTENANT TUCKEY'S NARRATIVE.

This officer informs the reader, that Colonel Collins, the Governor, Captain Woodriff, and himself, had an interview with some natives, who "came unarmed to the boats, without the smallest symptom of apprehension." Having to proceed toward the head of the Port in boats, the Lieutenant on duty found himself surrounded by about 200 armed natives. While the attention of the Whites was distracted by the throng, some clever fellows contrived to steal from the boat a tomahawk, an axe, and a saw. In the melée, one of the natives seized the Master's Mate in his arms. If disposed to be quarrelsome, we imagine the spear or boomerang would have been thrown, and not the baby carrying process adopted. If they desired a choice morsel for supper, they would hardly have fondled their victim in that style; as they never take prisoners alive, and torture them like the American Indians. At any rate, these "obviously hostile intentions made the application of firearms absolutely necessary to repel them, by which one native was killed and two or three wounded." This was the baptism of blood. It provoked revenge. The aborigines rallied their forces on the hill. A fine looking man, as Chief, came down alone in a most heroic manner to the tent, talking vehemently, and holding a very large war spear in a position for throwing. The British officer was struck with this gallant fellow, and determined to meet him frankly and kindly. He had confidence in the man because of his courage, and, therefore, laid down his gun, and went to meet the savage. The noble minded aborigine appreciated the white man's trustfulness, and immediately relinqnished the spear. But the tribe kept on their vociferations and their warlike demonstrations, and were advancing down the hill. Tuckey motioned the Chief to keep them back. He issued his command for them to retire. But not comprehending his language in the tumult, or disregarding his entreaties if heard, they tarried not in their progress; they wanted blood for blood. Not a moment was to be lost. The foremost in the throng was selected, and laid low by a musket ball. At the dreadful sound the Chief turned and fled with his retreating countrymen.

Mr. Tuckey gives a sketch of our sable acquaintances. "The

Digitized by Google

men were gaily adorned with pipe-clay painted faces, a head dress of swan's feathers, a necklace of reeds, and a bone or reed thrust fancifully through the septum of their nostrils." The only notice of the ladies is this, "One woman only was seen, who retired by desire of the men on our approach." The men were seen not to have their front tooth out like their neighbours at Sydney. The straw baskets were praised more than their spears, or their intelligence; for says our writer, "I should imagine the kangaroos out of the reach of their weapons or their ingenuity." As to their vanity, he tells us, "The Parisian beau cannot take greater pains in adjusting his hair, and perfume himself with the odours of the East, than the savage does in bedaubing his face with clays, or anointing his skin with the blubber of a whale."

THE FRENCH AND THE BLACKS IN 1803.

Peron, the naturalist on board Admiral Baudin's French discovery ship, *Geographe*, gives about the earliest notice of our Aborigines. Entering Flinders' Western Port in 1803, the Frenchmen named an island *Frenchman*, now *French*. It was there that Peron had his first interview with our natives, most probably the first of the kind, excepting the glance with which Flinders had been favoured some weeks before in Port Phillip Bay. Though short the description, it is important.

"Such of the natives they saw seemed mistrustful and perfidious. In their features, the shape of the head, the smoothness and great length of the hair, the inhabitants differ from D'Entrecasteaux Channel. (Tasmania.) They paint their body and face with stripes, crosses, white and red circles; and pierce the nostrils, through which they thrust a small stick six or seven inches long, like the Aborigines of Port Jackson. They wear collar fashion a sort of necklace, formed of a number of short tubes of coarse straw. They blacken their body and face with powdered charcoal. Of thirteen individuals seen, one only was clothed with a black skin, the other twelve being wholly naked."

Digitized by Google

STURT AND THE MURRAY BLACKS IN 1830.

Captain Charles Sturt, the devoted and successful Australian explorer, set out for Sydney in November, 1829, and succeeded in following down the Murray river to its embouchure through Lake Victoria into Encounter Bay, South Australia. First tracing our northern boundary, he was the earliest European visitant of those distant tribes. It will be seen that though these had not before seen a white man, they had to a fearful extent experienced in an indirect manner the curse of contact. New and loathesome diseases appeared among them, for the suffering of which they had no means of alleviation. Both in going down the stream and in returning, Mr. Sturt came in sight of thousands of natives. His courage prompted him to undertake so adventurous a journey, and his benevolence occasioned that perilous expedition to be unattended with bloodshed. For further particulars of that voyage we refer the reader to the "Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip;" we have now to confine our remarks to the Captain's intercourse with Buckley's Black Friends. He thus introduces his first visit from the Murray tribes.

"Some natives were observed running by the river-side behind us, but on turning the boat's head toward the shore, they ran away. It was evident they had no idea what we were, and, from their timidity, feeling assured that it would be impossible to bring them to a parley, we continued onwards till our usual hour of stopping, when we pitched our tents on the left bank for the night, it being the one opposite to that on which the natives had appeared. We conjectured that their curiosity would lead them to follow us, which they very shortly did; for we had scarcely made ourselves comfortable, when we heard their wild notes through the woods as they advanced towards the river; and their breaking into view with their spears and shields, and painted and prepared as they were for battle, was extremely fine. They stood threatening us, and making a great noise, for a considerable time, but finding that we took no notice of them, they at length became quiet. I then walked to some distance from the party, and taking a branch in my hand, as a sign of peace, beckoned them to swim to our side of the river, which, after some time, two or three of them did. But they

Digitized by Google

approached me with great caution, hesitating at every step. They soon, however, gained confidence, and were ultimately joined by all the males of their tribe. I gave the first who swam the river a tomahawk, (making this a rule in order to encourage them,) with which he was highly delighted. I shortly afterwards placed them all in a row, and fired a gun before them: they were quite unprepared for such an explosion, and after standing stupified and motionless for a moment or two, they simultaneously took to their heels, to our great amusement. I succeeded, however, in calling them back, and they regained their confidence so much, that sixteen of them remained with us all night, but the greater number retired at sunset. On the following morning they accompanied us down the river, where we fell in with their tribe, who were stationed on an elevated bank, a short distance below, to the number of eighty-three, men, women, and children. Their appearance was extremely picturesque and singular. They wanted us to land, but time was too precious for such delays. Some of the boldest of the natives swam round and round the boat, so as to impede the use of the oars, and the women on the bank evinced their astonishment by mingled yells and cries. They entreated us, by signs, to remain with them; but as I foresaw a compliance on this occasion would hereafter be attended with inconvenience, I thought it better to proceed on our journey; and the natives soon ceased their importunities, and, indeed, did not follow or molest us.

* * * * * *

"On the 19th, as we were about to conclude our journey for the day, we saw a large body of natives before us. On approaching them they shewed every disposition for combat, and ran along the banks with spears in rests, as if only waiting for an opportunity to throw them at us. They were upon the right, and as the river was broad enough to enable me to steer wide of them, I did not care much for their threats; but upon another party appearing on the left bank, I thought it high time to disperse one or other of them, as the channel was not wide enough to enable me to keep clear of danger, if assailed by both, as I might be while keeping amid the channel. I found, however, they did not know how to use the advantage they possessed, as the two divisions formed a junction;

Digitized by Google

those on the left swimming over to the stronger body upon the right bank. This fortunately prevented the necessity of any hostile measure on my part, and we were suffered to proceed unmolested for the present. The whole then followed us, without any symptom of fear, but making a dreadful shouting, and beating their spears and shields together, by way of intimidation. It is but justice to my men to say, that in all this critical situation, they evinced the greatest coolness, though it was impossible for any one to witness such a scene with indifference. As I did not intend to fatigue the men by continuing to pull farther than we were in the habit of doing, we landed at our usual time on the left bank, and while the people were pitching the tents, I walked down the bank with McLeay, to treat with these desperadoes in the best way we could across the water—a measure to which my men showed great reluctance, declaring that if during our absence the natives approached them, they would undoubtedly fire upon them. I assured them it was not my intention to go out of their sight. We took our guns with us, but determined not to use them until the last extremity, both from a reluctance to shed blood, and with a view to our future security. I held a long pantomimical dialogue with them across the water, and held out the olive branch in token of amity. They at length laid aside their spears, and a long consultation took place among them, which ended in two or three wading into the river, contrary, as it appeared, to the earnest remonstrance of the majority, who, finding that their entreaties had no effect, wept aloud, and followed them, with a determination, I am sure, of sharing their fate, whatever it might have been. As soon as they landed, McLey and I retired to a little distance from the bank and sat down, that being the usual way among the natives of the interior to invite to an interview. When they saw us act thus, they approached and sat down with us, but without looking up, from a kind of diffidence peculiar to them, and which exists even among the nearest relatives, as I have already had occasion to observe. As they gained confidence, however, they showed an excessive curiosity, and stared at us in the most earnest manner. We now led them to the camp, and I gave, as was my custom, the first approached, a tomahawk, and to the others

Digitized by Google

some pieces of iron hoop. Those who had crossed the river, amounted to about thirty-five in number. At sunset the majority of them left us; but three old men remained at the fire-side all night. I observed that few of them had either lost their front teeth, or lacerated their bodies, as the more westerly tribes do. The most loathsome diseases prevailed among them. Several were disabled by leprosy, or some similar disorder, and two or three had entirely lost their sight. They are, undoubtedly, a brave and confiding people, and are by no means wanting in natural affection. In person they resemble the mountain tribes. They have the thick lips, the sunken eye, the extendid nostril, and long beards; and both smooth and curly hair are common among them. Their lower extremities appear to bear no proportion to their bust in point of muscular strength, but the facility with which they ascend trees of the largest growth, and the activity with which they move upon all occasions, together with their singular erect stature, argue that such appearance is entirely deceptive. The old men slept very soundly by the fire, and were the last to get up in the morning. McLeay's extreme good humour had made a most favourable impression upon them, and I can picture him even now, joining in their wild cry. Whether it was from his entering so readily into their mirth, or from anything peculiar that struck them, the impression upon the whole of us was, that they took him to have been originally a black, in consequence of which they gave him the name of Rundi. Certain it is, they pressed him to show his side, and asked if he had not received a wound there—evidently as if the original Rundi had met with a violent death from a spear-wound in that place. The whole tribe, amounting in number to upwards of 150, assembled to see us take our departure. Four of them accompanied us, among whom there was one remarkable for personal strength and stature."

It was the next day after this interview that our countrymen nearly fared the fate of Mungo Park in Africa. Turning an angle in the river, they saw a vast concourse of some five or six hundred natives, armed and wrathful, prepared to take vengeance upon the White strangers for this invasion of their country. A projecting sandbank afforded better approach to their victims; on this the

Digitized by Google

leaders in brutal glee awaited the drifting of the boat. The danger was imminent. The guns were ready, the very finger was on the trigger, when Mr. McLeay called out that another party were approaching on the opposite bank. In a moment after, a man threw himself off a lofty cliff into the water, swam up to a big savage on the shore, seized him by his throat, and forcibly pushed him back from the river. "At one moment," says Sturt, "pointing to the boat, at another shaking his clenched fist in the faces of the most forward, and stamping with passion on the sand." This was their gigantic friend, who arrived in time to save them. The leader closes the story in these words: "We were so wholly lost in interest at the scene that was passing, that the boat was allowed to drift at pleasure. For my own part, I was overwhelmed with astonishment, and in truth stunned and confused, so singular, so unexpected, and so strikingly providential had been our escape."

Upon another occasion they were relieved from a difficulty by the same noble hearted man. The boat had got fast, and a large tribe came unexpectedly upon them. But the well known voice of their tall, dark brother was heard; Sturt shouted in reply, and signalized distress. Plenty of bark canoes were launched immediately; using their spears for poles and paddles, the natives pushed off the boat, and set the Europeans afloat again. We are distressed, however, to read in Captain Sturt's journal such passages as follow: "The most loathsome of diseases prevailed among the tribes, nor were the youngest infants exempt from them. Indeed, so young were some whose condition was truly disgusting, that I cannot but suppose that they have been born in a state of disease." "Syphilis prevails amongst them with fearful violence. I distributed some Turner's cerate to the women, but left Fraser to superintend its application. It would do no good, of course, but it convinced the natives we intended well toward them, and on that account it was politic to give it, setting aside any humane feeling." His prudence showed itself in his discipline; thus he says, "I was particularly careful not to do anything that would alarm them, or to permit any liberty to be taken with their women. Our reserve in this respect seemed to excite their surprize, for they asked sundry questions, by signs and expressions, as to whether we had any women, and where

Digitized by Google

they were. The whole tribe generally assembled to receive us, and all, without exception, were in a complete state of nudity; and really the loathesome condition and hideous countenances of the women would, I should imagine, have been a complete antidote to the sensual passion." He furthermore tells us, "with every new tribe we were obliged to submit to an examination, and to be pulled about, and fingered all over."

MAJOR MITCHELL AND THE BLACKS, IN 1836.

This distinguished discoverer of what he called AUSTRALIA FELIX, arrived at Lake Benanee by the Murray, July 27, 1836. To his surprise he fell in with a tribe with whom he had a brush some two hundred miles off upon the Darling. They called out, "Goway, goway, goway;" which, being interpreted, means, "Come here." Piper, the Sydney aboriginal guide, did not admire their contiguity, and seriously asked his leader, what the Governor said to him about killing the "Wild Blackfellow;" giving a significant idea of his estimation of their value. Though at first the tribe assumed friendly appearances, there was not wanting proof of their hostile spirit. An old fellow approached the Major quite confidently and smilingly, with a bundle of spears concealed beneath his kangaroo rug. But they were prepared. It was noticed that the rascals, with the cunning of foxes, understood the business of getting guns ready. A few shots procured "permanent deliverance of the party from imminent danger." It was among these people that the explorer saw an Australian beauty. "The youngest," says he, "was the handsomest female I had ever seen among the natives. She was so far from black, that the red colour was very apparent in her cheek. She sat before me in a corner of the group, nearly in the attitude of Mr. Bailey's fine statue of Eve at the Fountain; and apparently equally unconscious that she was naked." An old man civilly offered to barter her for a tomahawk to the evidently admiring soldier. His refusal was doubtless regarded as more foolish than scrupulous.

The English were amused with the Painted Tribe, the men of which accurately marked out the muscles of their bodies with the

Digitized by Google

help of the pipe-clay. Speaking of an Australian Barrington, the traveller writes: "His hands were ready to seize any living thing; his step, light and noiseless as that of a shadow, gave no intention of his approach." Some of these folks believed that the clothes of the Europeans made them proof against attack by the spear. When near Mount William, our countrymen were agreeably surprised to meet with a Blackfellow who could say the word "milk," and had been in Whitefellows' company before. Upon the banks of the Glenelg, Mitchell fell in with a lubra and her child. The little fellow was being carried on her back between a kangaroo rug and a circular mat covering. He is thus described: "His pleasant and youthful face, he being a very fine specimen of the native race, presented a striking contrast to the miserable looks of his whining mother." The manner in which the explorers warded off an impending attack, was effectual as novel. The natives had been thronging them for some time; and with all their assumed candour and indifference, Piper discovered that they contemplated a night onslaught upon the trespassers on their hunting grounds. Their thirst for blood was allayed by a capital manœuvre of the Old Peninsular Warrior. When quite dark, "at a given signal, Burnett suddenly sallied forth, wearing a gilt mask, and holding in his hand a blue light, with which he fixed a rocket. Two men, concealed behind the boat carriage, bellowed hideously through speaking trumpets, while all the others shouted and discharged their carbines in the air. Burnett marched solemnly toward the astonished natives, who were seen through the gloom but for an instant, as they made their escape, and disappeared for ever."

THE ASSOCIATION AND THE BLACKS.

We must refer the reader to the "Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip" for particulars of the Association of certain respectable Tasmanian Colonists in 1835, under the management of Mr. John Batman, whose object was the Settlement of this colony. Their intention is thus set forth by Major Mercer, one of the company; "The formation of a nucleus of a free and useful colony, founded upon principles of conciliation and civilization, of philanth-

Digitized by Google

ropy, morality and temperance, without danger of its ever becoming onerous to the mother country, and calculated to ensure the well-being and comfort of the natives." If not settled by a confederation of humane and intelligent persons, he predicted that "The country would be, if ever, occupied hereafter by the extermination of the Aboriginal inhabitants alone."

For this purpose, Mr. Batman was sent over to conciliate the good feelings of the Aborigines by presents and fair treaty; as he stated in his letter from Launceston to Governor Arthur, "By obtaining from them a grant of a portion of that territory, on equitable principles, not only might the sources of this colony be considerably extended, but the object of civilization be established; and which in process of time would lead to the civilization of a large portion of the Aborigines." Additional evidence of this worthy spirit is seen in the following document.

"*Memorandum for Mr. Batman's Guidance about the Natives.*

"The first point to be attended to, is to keep up a friendly feeling on their part to the establishment, and to ensure on their part a feeling of confidence, and the next is to make them as useful to the Association as possible. Much may be done by the force of example through the Sydney natives. It will be desirable to have two scales of rations: one for them who will make themselves useful, and a less scale for those who will not. That civilization will best proceed by dividing the natives into families, and employing six or eight at each of the stations, if they can be induced voluntarily to do so; but it must not be done by compulsion. Habits of labour will only be acquired by degrees; and if each party were allowed to have a small piece of ground to cultivate for themselves, it would materially assist.

"It will be very expedient to appoint Buckley superintendent of the natives, for he will be enabled under Mr. Batman's directions to keep them in proper order, and to make them understand the advantages they will receive in pursuing this plan, and so soon as this is accomplished they will become useful servants of the institution.

Digitized by Google

"Some regard ought to be had to the amount of tribute payable, and that for the excess some equivalent in labour given, but it will not be desirable in the first instance to coerce the natives to labor.

"It may be questionable whether it will be prudent to give the natives mutton, otherwise the flocks may and most probably will hereafter suffer; if they required animal food it will be better to supply them with salt pork.

"Signed J. T. GELLIBRAND
for C. SWANSTON.
J. T. GELLIBRAND.
JNO. H. WEDGE.
W. G. SAMS.
ANTHY. COTTRELL.
M. CONNELLY.

"October 22, 1835."

In a letter of Batman's to Governor Arthur, dated October 23, 1835, we have the following reference to the natives: "I have the honor of reporting the progress made by the Association since July last with the native tribes. From that period up to the commencement of this month, when Mr. Wedge left Port Phillip, the intercourse has been kept up upon the most friendly terms, and from eighty to one hundred natives have been clothed and supplied with daily rations at the expense of the Association. The natives have been partially occupied in habits of industry, and I have not the least hesitation in affirming, that if no unforeseen obstacles occur, a gradual system of civilization will obtain."

The Association provided suitable married and well conducted servants for their stations in Port Phillip, organised a system of protection for the natives, and appointed a gentleman, Dr. Thomson of Geelong, as surgeon and catechist. But after contesting with Government for some time, the authorities would not sanction their purchase from the Aborigines, and the company ceased to exist. Yet the influence of their judicious and Christian policy remained long afterwards, and gave a tone to the treatment of the inhabitants

Digitized by Google

They never suffered like the poor Tasmanians. Whatever they endured from certain brutal stockkeepers, the Squatters, as a class, had respect to their claims, and treated them with humanity and kindness.

MR. BATMAN AND THE BLACKS.

This interesting Founder of the Colony of Port Phillip was a devoted friend to the dark skinned man. He was warmly attached to the persecuted Tasmanians; and he evidenced his honest regard to the interests of our aborigines, by the honorable treaty he sought to make with them, which is described at length in the other work on the Colony. When he arrived as a settler with his family, there were always many natives to be seen lounging about Batman's Hill. The visitors by the *Rattlesnake*, in June, 1836, were much amused by the Soyer demonstration which the kind-hearted Batman had prepared for his black friends. There was a large boiler outside, full of rice, and into which dark masses of sugar were tumbled, with the stirring. Then came a man with a shovel, and scooped up a ration for each expectant one. Loud laughter accompanied the process, and gratified merriment aided digestion. It so happened at one of these reunions, that something was missing,—a most unusual circumstance. Sending for his telescope, Mr. Batman slowly walked round the group, looking to discover the offender. The excitement and perturbation of the thief at this novel and certain mode of detection revealed his guilt.

Our Founder first came in contact with the Port Phillip Blacks on Sunday, May 31st, 1835, on the western shore of the Bay. Having with him some civilized Sydney natives, he sent them onward, a-head, to a camp of twenty women and twenty-four children, who were comforting themselves over fires in the absence of their hunting lords. Mr. Batman has the following notices of them in his journal. "They seemed quite pleased with my natives who could partially understand them; they sang and danced for them." "Every woman had a child at her back but one, who was quite young, and very good looking." Each of these ladies had a burden to carry of some sixty pounds weight in their nets, consisting of

Digitized by Google

roots, bones, nuts, tomahawks, &c. One had a part of a wheel spoke; and another, an iron hoop. The account is thus continued: "They came back with us where I had some blankets, looking glasses, beads, handkerchiefs, and apples. I gave them eight pairs of blankets, thirty handkerchiefs, eighteen necklaces of beads, six pounds of sugar, twelve looking glasses, and a quantity of apples, which they seemed much pleased with." Then follows a notice of the fair one: "The young woman whom I have spoken of before, gave me a very handsome basket of her own make." A notice of the younger folks follows: "The children were very good looking, and of a healthy appearance."

One week after, he fell in with a friendly chief and his family near the Merri Creek, who introduced him to the rest of his tribe, the Jagga Jagga. There were three noble brothers of that name, who ever afterward became the sincere and devoted followers of Mr. Batman. It was with these that he entered into his famous treaty. The William Penn of Port Phillip closes his account of that week with the Aborigines, with these words: "They certainly appear to me to be of a superior race of natives which I have ever seen."

MR. WEDGE AND THE BLACKS IN 1835.

We have been favoured with a manuscript notice of our Port Phillip natives, from John Helder Wedge, Esq., M.L.C., of Tasmania, and then one of the Port Phillip Association. This is the record of his visit to the Blacks Friends of the Wild White Man.

"On landing at Port Phillip on the 7th August, 1835, at the encampment of the party, three white men and some Sydney natives left for the purpose of maintaining the friendly intercourse which had been established with the aborigines of that part of New Holland, I found seven families of the natives residing in their huts around the encampment. The greater part of them were absent at the time on a hunting excursion, but a boy came down with the white men to welcome us on our arrival. An old man (Pewitt) and his two wives, were at the huts, together with some young girls who had been promised in marriage to the Sydney

Digitized by Google

natives left by Mr. Batman. I soon learnt that the most friendly understanding existed with the natives; indeed I scarcely needed this information, for it was evident from the light hearted playfulness of the boy, the cheerfulness of the old man, and the vivacious loquacity of the females, who came and shook hands with me on my arrival. They were evidently anxious to inform me by signs that the families who inhabited the several huts were out hunting and that they would come home in the evening. On the return of the various families with the game which they had obtained during the day, the members severally welcomed me by a shake of the hand. The only married female of our party (Mrs. H. Batman) and her four little daughters, with whom the natives were much delighted, particularly attracted their attention. Although they brought home with them plenty of provisions consisting of various edible roots, kangaroo-rats and calkiel (the young ants in a fly state taken from decayed hollow trees) they soon began to importune us for bread and other things, not excepting the cutlery. From this I inferred at once that, to satisfy their newly acquired appetite for our food and other things which we brought with us, such as knives, tomahawks, and blankets, was a sure way of conciliating them.

"In this conclusion at which I thus arrived, I was fully confirmed by Buckley, who on every occasion evinced the greatest desire to be of use, whenever he had it in his power to do so, and who gave me a general outline of the character of the different natives as they arrived, one of whom (Murradonnanuke) he pointed out as being more to be dreaded on account of his treachery, than any of the other chiefs; as one of the main objects I had in view, besides examining the country was to make myself acquainted with the habits and dispositions of the natives, I devoted the first few days after my arrival to studying their characters. For this purpose I went out hunting with them daily, and spent the greater part of my time among them, I soon satisfied myself that by a little tact and management there was no danger to be apprehended from them, although I learnt from Buckley that in the treatment of each other they were treacherous. To command their respect, I found it was necessary to make them fully understand that it was in our power, not only to minister to their wants and comforts, but amply to avenge

Digitized by Google

any outrage. In impressing them with this idea Buckley was of great use to me, by making known to them the ample means we had of furnishing them with food, blankets, &c.; and explaining the object which we had in view in settling amongst them, and our desire to be on friendly terms with them, which was mainly compassed by evincing a confidence devoid of fear in our deportment towards them, and by abstaining from any act which might lead them to doubt the sincerity of our intentions. I learnt from Buckley that they were cannibals. His statement on this head was confirmed by the two youths who attached themselves to me during my stay in New Holland, and who accompanied me on several excursions I made into the interior; but they do not seem to indulge in this horrible propensity, except when the tribes are at war with each other, when the bodies of those who are killed are roasted, and their bones are infallibly picked by the teeth of their enemy. Of this custom they make no secret, and on being questioned speak of it as a matter of course, and describe the mode of preparing their victim for the repast. Disgusting as is this practice, (the process of which is too revolting to commit to paper,) a still more horrible one if possible prevails—that of destroying their infant at its birth. The cause by which they appear to be influenced, is the custom they have of nursing their children till they are three or four years old. To get rid therefore of the trouble and inconvenience of finding sustenance for two, should the second be born before the eldest is weaned, they destroy the youngest immediately after it is born. Although this explanation was given me by Buckley, and I have no doubt this is in most instances the cause, yet some women perpetrate the murder of their infants from mere wantonness, and as it would seem to us, a total absence of that maternal feeling, which is found even in the brute creation. One woman in particular (the wife I think of Mullamboid) was pointed out to me, who had destroyed ten out of eleven of her children, one of whom she killed a few days previous to my arrival at the Port. Notwithstanding the increase of the tribes is thus kept down, Polygamy is common amongst them, few of the men have less than two wives and some of them four or five. The women, as is the case with most savages, are quite subservient to the men, and are kept in

Digitized by Google

excellent discipline; chastisement quickly follows the least offence, and a fire stick is not unfrequently the instrument of correction. The wealth of the men may be said to consist in the number of their wives, for their chief employment is in procuring food for their lords. On one occasion I was witness to a scene that afforded me some amusement, although it was no fun to the poor women concerned. My attention was attracted by the outcry of the women who were receiving chastisement from their husband (Murradonnanuke) who was punishing them by throwing fire sticks at them in the most furious manner. On enquiry, I learnt that the cause of offence arose from the poor creatures not having brought home that evening a quantity of provisions sufficient to satisfy his insatiable appetite. In the regulations which prevail respecting their wives, they have one which seems to have some connection with, or similar to the Mosaic law. On the death of the husband his wives became the property of the eldest of his brothers or his next of kin. The men are jealous of their wives, and should any intrigue be discovered it would probably lead to the death of one or both of the offending parties; although, if the husband receives what he considers to be an adequate compensation, he is accommodating to his friend. I do not believe infidelity is frequent among the women, unless sanctioned by the husband. During the whole time I was among them, I never observed any advances or levity of conduct on their part, although it is not at all improbable that they are restrained by fear of consequences should they be detected. In bestowing daughters for wives, they are frequently promised as soon as they are born, and on these occasions the parents receive presents of food, opossum and kangaroo rugs, clubs, spears, &c., from the person to whom she is betrothed, and this arrangement is considered to be binding, although it sometimes happens that these promises are broken by the parents, especially when the man who has received the promise belongs to another and distant tribe. When this occurs, it creates a feeling of enmity and it is not unfrequently taken up by the whole tribe, who make common cause with the aggrieved party. If they once determine on being revenged, they never lose sight of their object till they have satisfied themselves by a general conflict with the tribe to

Digitized by Google

whom the offending party belongs, or it sometimes happens that the poor girl and her husband are singled out, and in the dead of the night the spear gives both a passport to the land whose inhabitants live without hunting. The men are prohibited from looking at the mother of the girls promised them in marriage. This singular custom is observed with the strictest caution. On passing the hut of the mother-in-law, or any place where they suppose her to be, they carefully turn their head away, and evince great concern if by any chance they should see her, although I am not aware of any penalty being attached to the offence save that of displeasing the parents. On meeting with Nullaboin and his family, I took notice that a young girl just married carefully avoided looking at a particular man, for what reason I cannot divine, unless it was that the old man had been promised her first daughter.

"From enquiries which I made on the subject, I am induced to believe that a feeling of enmity does not permanently exist among the tribes, as it is terminated by a general battle royal, something after the style of an Irish fair. A short time previous to my departure a few men with their wives, from an adjoining tribe, came to that amongst whom I was living, with an invitation to join them in a conflict which they meditated with an adjoining tribe. They sent two or three young men to a tribe to the westward, inviting them also to join them on this occasion. I learnt that this hostile feeling had been created by a man having lost one of his eyes in a scuffle with a man belonging to the Western Port tribe. This accident happened about eight months previously, and although the party who now sought to avenge himself was the aggressor, having wounded his antagonist with a spear, he nevertheless determined on having satisfaction, and had succeeded in inducing his own tribe and that with which I was living, and probably would influence the other also, to whom an embassy of young men had been despatched to the westward, to espouse the cause of his odd eye. They also gave an invitation to the seven Sydney natives to join them with their guns. This of course I discouraged, and I was not without hopes that they might be induced through the influence of Buckley to forego their intention of taking their revenge, although from

Digitized by Google

what he said, I concluded there was not much chance of such a result. Buckley said that the time of their meeting was very uncertain, that it might happen in a week or two, or it might be put off some months, but that the collision was almost certain to take place sooner or later. In these conflicts it does not often happen that many lives are lost, seldom more than one or two; frequently all return from the place alive and no other mischief done than an eye less, a head broken, or an impression made upon their coatless backs by a club or spear; so expert are they in avoiding the missiles of their opponents. All feeling of hostility ceases with the battle, and cordiality again prevails, till it is interrupted by the impulse of their feeling which is extremely sensitive; in fact they are nearly as pugnacious as though their birth-place has been the Green Island. Like all others—uncivilized and in a state of nature, they are astonishingly dexterous in the use of their weapons, employed by them in the defence of their persons, and in procuring food; and in tracking each other, as well as kangaroos and other animals they are very expert. The most trifling disarrangement of the grass, a broken twig, or the slightest thing which indicates the direction of the object of pursuit is at once perceived by them, and they follow the track with ease at a brisk pace. On several occasions I witnessed their adroitness in this respect. In fact, their perceptions in seeing, hearing and smelling are surprisingly acute, and in the pursuit of their game they evince the patient perseverance so peculiar to man living in a state of nature. Their food consists principally of kangaroo and other animals, fish and roots of various sorts; black swans, ducks, and many other birds; in fact there is scarcely any animal or bird which comes amiss to them, and many reptiles: amongst others a species of snake comes within their bill of fare. In their appetites they are quite ravenous, and the quantity they devour at one meal would astonish even a London alderman, although they are not quite so fastidious in the quality of their viands.

"I could not learn that they have any religious observances, and indeed from the information gathered from Buckley, I am led to believe they have no idea whatever of a Supreme Being, although it is somewhat difficult to reconcile the fact of their believing in a

Digitized by Google

future state, for they certainly entertain the idea that, after death, they again exist, being transformed into white men. This is obviously a new idea, since they have been acquainted with us, and is an evidence that the friendly intercourse we have established with them, will by degrees operate upon their minds, and gradually work an amelioration of their condition. Of this being ultimately affected I entertain very sanguine expectations, and I think I am warranted in doing so, by the result of the experiments I made to induce them to habits of industry whilst residing amongst them. The men on several occasions rendered assistance in carrying sod for the erection of our huts, and many of the women were almost constantly employed in making baskets, during the last week or ten days previous to my departure. In re-payment for these and other services, bread was given them on the completion of their tasks, with which they were well satisfied, and I have little doubt *if proper arrangements were made*, and attention paid, that great progress might be made in a short time towards establishing more civilized habits. Their whole time may be said to be devoted to procuring food during the day. All their thoughts seem to be directed towards ministering to their appetites. The women are the drudges of their husbands, and are seldom idle during the day, being for the most part employed either in getting the various edible roots with which the country abounds, or in making baskets and nets, and any other occupations directed by their husbands. Their habitations are of the most rude and simple construction, the materials of which they are made being the branches of trees laid with tolerable compactness, and pitched at an angle of about 45 degrees. In shape they form a segment of a circle, and their size is in proportion to the number of inmates of which the family is composed."

THE FIRST OVERLANDER AND THE BLACKS.

Mr. John Gardiner came overland from Sydney at the latter end of 1835. In giving us the narrative of that cattle driving trip, he said that only upon one occasion did he fall in with any natives, and

Digitized by Google

that was upon the Dividing Range, somewhere in the Kilmore district. He was then saluted by a black with the cry of "Batman!" accompanied with the usual glucking sound of astonishment. His lubra was a tall noble looking woman, with very handsome features, and an olive complexion. The travellers immediately set her down for a daughter of the gigantic Wild White Man, Buckley. Their native Stock-keeper from Sydney fell desperately in love with the lady, and would have her on any terms. He very seriously deliberated upon the best means of rendering her a widow, that he might become her protector.

The Quaker Missionary, James Backhouse, tells the following singular story respecting this Overlander, which he heard from that gentleman, on the Yarra, in 1837. "In one of J. Gardiner's journies from Sydney, one of his men was bitten by a venomous serpent. The wound was sucked, but the man showed symptoms of faintness of alarming character. The party had received intimation from a native woman, that some of her countrymen intended to attack them in the night; and at the juncture, when the poison seemed to be taking effect, the lights of the natives were seen approaching. The party were thrown into a state of alarm; they watched a favourable opportunity, seized the blacks at unawares, and expostulated with them against making such an attack upon persons in no way disposed to injure them. The chief was detained as a hostage, and placed under the charge of one of the party, who, being overcome by fatigue, fell asleep, and his captive escaped, but returned no more to annoy them. These circumstances diverted the attention of the company from the envenomed man, and his case was forgotten until the next morning, when he was enquired of respecting his welfare. He also had forgotten his malady; fear seems to have suspended the effect of the poison, and he said he felt no more of it from the time the lights of the Blacks appeared.

COUNT STRZELECKI AND THE GIPPS LAND BLACKS.

This kind hearted, scientific Polish noble wrote an interesting work upon Australia some fourteen years ago. When descending from our Alps into the country he called Gipps Land, his party

Digitized by Google

came upon a large encampment of the wild natives. Having been for several days on short allowance for water, the Europeans rushed hastily toward a pool. They were instantly withheld by their own aboriginal guide, who represented their conduct as indecorous, impolitic, and dangerous. They were on the lands of strangers, and had no legal right to fire or water. At his direction, therefore, they sat down quietly upon the grass. A quarter of an hour had elapsed, when one of the Gipps Landers came across, and politely handed them a piece of burning wood. With this a fire was kindled, and an opossum cooked for supper. But it was drink they were so anxious to obtain. Yet among these wild children of nature, there were set conventional forms of society, as binding and exactive as those of refined circles, and the infringement of which perilled the social position of the offender. It was contrary to aboriginal etiquette to ask for water; the guide then began gnawing at a stick, all the while casting side long, wistful glances at the pool. The look was sufficiently suggestive, and a calabash of water was generously brought to them.

They now prepared for sleep. When the gentlemen at home witnessed these final camping preparations, they sent an old man to confer with our party. The guide met him. A long yabber ensued. Questions were asked about the white men, why they came, and where they were going. The envoy returned to his tribe, and was heard in shrill accents loudly repeating the nature of the conference. Silence followed this communication; after which the tribe came to a decision. The old man appeared with the ultimatum. The white men were instantly to depart. Knowing that appeal would be useless, they gathered up their knapsacks and went on their way. Trespassers were not allowed; but instead of steel traps and spring guns, they were first tendered the rights of hospitality, and suffered to recruit their physical systems, before ordered to withdraw. It has not been quite in that courteous style that we have driven the owners of the soil from our homesteads, or the Chinese from our shores.

Digitized by Google

MR. McMILLAN AND THE WILD GIPPS LAND NATIVES.

Though Count Strzelecki was the first who traversed the Snowy Alpine country between Sydney and Melbourne, ascended Mount Kosciusko, and named a province after Governor Gipps, yet Mr. McMillan has undoubtedly the priority of discovery of that very interesting country. Having been specially furnished by that gentleman with an account of his expedition in 1840, we extract such portions for the present work as relate to the Aborigines. We have introduced to us an account of his Maneroo native guide Jemmy, and his fears of the formidable Gipps Landers.

"Jemmy Gibber was getting fearfully alarmed of meeting with a wild tribe of Blacks called Warrigals, inhabiting that part of the country, and consequently refused to proceed any further with me, making an attempt to get away from me. I was then in a wild mountainous country, covered principally with scrub, and my companion gave me to understand that he was ignorant of our whereabouts, and that I must trust to my tinder box (a name he gave to my pocket compass). I got him to go on with me until the evening, when we camped and lighted our fire, and after taking refreshment laid down to rest. I nearly paid dearly this night for my confidence in my companion. After being sometime asleep I awoke suddenly, and to my consternation found Jemmy Gibber standing over me with his upraised waddy or club, one blow of which would have settled me. I at once presented my pistol at him, when he at once cried out, begging me not to shoot him, that he had been dreaming that another black fellow had been taking away his wife, and that he did not want to kill me; but it was evident to me his intention was to take my life, that he might then return home."

He then shows us these ugly strangers:

"This was the first day on which I met any of the Black Tribes or Wild Blacks. On meeting us they approached close up to us, and stood looking at us until I dismounted, when they commenced yelling, and instantly took to their heels. It is my belief they took the horse and rider to be one until I dismounted, having never seen a white man or a horse before."

Digitized by Google

Again we read: "About these morasses to the north-east of the River Latrobe, we saw some hundreds of the natives who, on our approach, burned their camp and betook themselves to the scrub; we, however, managed to overtake an old man that could not walk fast; to him I gave a knife and a pair of trowsers, and endeavoured by all means in my power to open a communication with the Blacks through him, but they would not come near us. It was amusing to see the old man after shaking hands with all the party, walking up to the horses and shaking each of them by the bridle, thinking the same form necessary to be gone through with them as with us. The only ornaments he had about him were human hands, either men's or women's, beautifully preserved, suspended from his neck."

"On my way back from the station, I was informed that my party had been driven out of the New Country by the Wild Blacks, which I found to be too true. Mr. McAlister whom I had left in charge of the party had a very narrow escape, six of the Blacks attacked him at once and deprived him of his gun. They were obliged to give way to the Blacks, who pursued them for twenty-five miles." The sequel of the story is, that, accompanied by six others, he had a desperate skirmish with the natives in November, 1840. Poor Mr. McAlister was killed in a conflict in 1841. Even after the settlement was formed at Port Albert, it was long before one could stir a mile from the Port without being well armed.

Mr. McIntyre gave us a description of the Wild Gipps Landers' visit to the out station of Mr. Jamieson, Western Port. When they burst in upon the Whites, they were evidently not up in a knowledge of our domestic life. They broke open the store for acquisitive reasons. The sugar and tea were emptied upon the earth as useless. The dairy afforded rare fun. They knew not what to make of the milk; so they poured that away. But the bright milk dishes took their fancy amazingly. Throwing them up in the air, they laughed immoderately at their shining, and their brilliant glitter in the sunshine. The blankets only were appropriated and taken. No harm was done to any one. The Wild Men then retired to their mountain home.

Digitized by Google

THE WILD BLACKS OF LAKE HINDMARSH.

Mr. Protector Robinson first came in contact with these strange Blackfellows, whom he thus describes: "The Aborigines were at the lake, and a frail canoe, for the purpose I presume of floating over the soft, and, in some places, deep mud, was on shore.

"The natives as we approached fled and hid themselves among the reeds or behind the trees. My native interpreter told them who I was, when they timidly came forth, and trembling stood before us. They were informed that White men would occupy their country and treat them kindly. They appeared greatly alarmed at the horses, and (except a young female adorned with emu feathers) were naked. I understood we were the first Whites they had personal communication with. Their dietary consisted of frogs, shrimps, grubs and roots; the latter, cooked on heated stones and hot ashes. A fruit with an orbicular rough stone was observed. A large and well constructed native habitation shaped in the form of a span roof, thatched with reeds, pleasantly situated on the verge of a pond, was quite unique and highly creditable to the skill and industry of the native artizans. On the Murray they exhume their dead. A tumulus on elevated ground, encircled by a neat parterre, had been recently formed, indicated by the embers of the watch fire, and the green boughs on the top of the mound."

Digitized by Google

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER OF THE PORT PHILLIP BLACKS.

As a people, the Port Phillip natives are very unlike the absurd caricature of D'Urville's, seen in Pritchard's History of Man. The men are usually robust, with well proportioned limbs, not unpleasing countenances, and a head little inferior to that of the proud Caucasian. The forehead is massive and perpendicular. The development of the perceptive faculties corresponds to their extraordinary power of sight, and mechanical ingenuity and dexterity. Though not students of Euclid, Locke or Herschel, they exhibit in their own way a practical sense of reasoning and propriety of judgment, as led Sir T. Mitchell to say, "They are as apt and intelligent as any other race of men I am acquainted with." Mr. Westgarth exclaims, "The untutored savage shines with a lustre of his own, which appears so much superior, as in others it is manifestly inferior in comparison with civilized man." It is scarcely fair to judge of their intelligence by ours, the offspring of centuries of civilizing processes. Mr. Ex-Protector Parker assures us, "They are just as capable of receiving instruction, just as capable of mental exercises as any more favoured race." Archbishop Polding says, "I have no reason to think them much lower than ourselves in many respects."

Their eyes are large, brilliant, vivacious and expressive. Their noses are broad, their teeth are powerful and white, their mouths are wide, and their hair is dark, glossy and curly. Many men have beards of long and shining curls that would excite the envy of a Pasha. When an aboriginal young man is adorned for a corrobory, with his hair parted, greased and curled; his sinewy and finely chiselled limbs, untrammelled with dress; his noble bust, artistically decorated with ochre by a favorite lady; and his joyous face beaming with exuberant good humour,—he presents a far more pleasing object to the lover of natural grace, than the bejewelled, scented, patent booted, smirking fop of Regent Street. The skin is not black, but of a dark copper cast. The use of grease, charcoal and ochre, however beneficial in resisting the rays of the sun, obscures their color. Cicatrices, or raised scars across their chests,

Digitized by Google

supply as ornament the tatoo of the ancient English, or modern New Zealander. Their habits may appear disgusting sometimes from our ignorance of their object. Their sense of decency is observed according to the Mosaic ritual, Deut. 23c 12 13v. The majestic step of our savage, his erect posture, the ease with which he comports himself in the presence of our colonial grandees, his independence, nay, his haughtiness of demeanour, with that serene, confident and cold glance of the eye, all indicate a life of freedom in his wilds, without the tyranny of irresponsible chieftainship, and the thraldom of a legal code.

Their character is indeed made up of incongruities apparently irreconcilable. We agree with Mr. Eyre, the distinguished traveller, that good temper naturally characterizes them; but, then, they are sometimes under the influence of a satanic fury. Affectionate and grateful, they can be remorselessly cruel and vindictively treacherous. Their transitions are rapid; now, tranquil and soft as an Australian morn, and again, violent and destructive as the stormy typhoon. The disciples of Rousseau behold them virtuous, gentle, good; Mr. Dredge calls them "extremely wicked and degraded." Bad as they were, however, their Christian visitors have taught them the moral vices of swearing and drunkenness. Their is no want of natural affection and delicacy of feeling. A Murray Black was observed rubbing up an old pannican which had belonged to his deceased wife. Being asked what he was going to do with it, he mentioned his intention to carry it to her brother at Moorunde; adding, "Then him plenty cry." They are truly a happy, merry community. Their camp is a very home of buffoonery and laughter. Without the conventional decorum and restraint of our civilized society, without our jealousy of vanity and punctitious observances, they gambol with the freedom of roistering children. Such an idea as suicide never comes into their minds; they have no bills to meet, and no position to sustain. The condition of the old men in a tribe is honourable, gratifying, and fattening; their counsels are treated with respect, they marry the young wives, and they may eat what they please.

Digitized by Google

CLOTHING, ORNAMENTS AND TENEMENTS.

Generally speaking the Australian aborigines prefer the absence of dress. In cold weather, the opossum or kangaroo skin rug, neatly sewed with sinews or a kind of grass, is thrown around their persons. The substitution of this by the lazy blanket is no improvement. On the sea coast garments have been worked out of rushes and seaweed. Their ornaments are simple, and not so regarded as among other people. There is rather an indifference than otherwise to indulgence in finery; though it may arise from public opinion, and the fear of ridicule. The feathers of the swan, emu, cockatoo, &c., adorn them on grand occasions; when the hair is sometimes studded with the teeth of kangaroos and claws of birds, as among the American Indians, with strings of pieces of small reed around their necks. The women are deemed sufficiently beautiful without such silly appendages; they have no auxiliaries to their native charms. The men even appropriate to themselves alone the curl and ochre band; though both sexes have cicatrices or raised scars, the ladies' backs being thus adorned. The Mosaical injunctions "Nor print any mark upon you; I am the Lord," scarcely applies to our natives. The Tattoo belongs to the New Zealander.

Their dwellings are not substantial. Continually roving about in search for food, they cannot trouble about such erections; and, generally, in so fine a climate as this, they have little requirement for them. A few sticks and boughs;—some branches against a fallen tree;—or the breakwind of an opossum rug, is about all they desire. Sometimes the wirlie is framed of reeds or sticks, and covered with boughs, bark, grass, rags, or old clothes; it is occasionally made to turn round, so as to suit the change of wind. Where food is plentiful, the huts are better built. Mr. Protector Robinson, on his first visit to the wild tribes of Lake Hindmarsh found some of this character, which he thus describes; "large and well constructed habitations shaped in the form of a span roof, thatched with reeds, pleasantly situated on the verge of a pond, was quite unique, and highly creditable to the skill and industry of the native artizans." When near Mount Napier he

Digitized by Google

came upon 13 large huts of wood covered with turf. Trenches 500 yards long led to extensive intercourses. "The whole," says he, "covered an area of about ten acres, and must have been done at great cost of labor to the aborigines."

FOOD AND COOKING.

There was no want of adequate nutrition for our natives before the advent of the whites; and even now, especially with their diminished numbers, there is enough and to spare. In some districts certain descriptions of food are now scarce, and invasion of the hunting grounds of another tribe is a cause of strife. The animal world, roots, seeds, and fruits, are indifferently taken. But they had certain strict regulations about these. Thus, children may eat anything before they are ten years of age. Then, boys may not eat the Kangaroo, nor the female and young of any kind. Young females are not to partake of the Crane, Bandicoot, male Wallaby, and Native Companion. Young men are prohibited Black Ducks, Cranes, Eagles, Snakes, Wallabies and the young from the pouch; the seniors tell them that if they do eat of these, sores will break out all over their bodies. Married men till forty years old must not taste the Crane, Eagle and Native Companion. The adult female may not eat of the male Opossum, Wallaby, Red Kangaroo and Snakes. No females are to eat of fish caught under the cliffs to which they retire to spawn. Women in a certain state have to consume more vegetables. The old folks eat what they like. These rules have lapsed since the Aborigines' decline and change of habits.

They were not wanting in dainties, besides ducks and geese. There were delicious sausages of fat, placed in the entrails of the pelican, which were passed round the circle for individual sucking. The Loap, or Manna, causes quite a festival in its season. The favourite Myrnong root, of a radish character, has been much destroyed by our sheep. The Karko stick with a hook fished up the luscious grubs from their wooden caverns. A whale cast upon the shore was a thorough Lord Mayor's feast. Neighbouring tribes would make friendly overtures, and there would be nothing but cut and come again. Capt. Lyons tells us that he gave an Esquimaux

Digitized by Google

40 lbs. of seal's flesh for a day's feed; we do not think that an Australian's appetite is quite so voracious, but he made the whale's visit the occasion of a gorge, and carried off masses of the half putrid flesh as a present to his inland acquaintances. Mr. Liddy, who had the first garden on Melbourne Eastern Hill, found the sable strangers fond of the cabbage, but without a relish for the potatoe.

The Native Cook was pronounced by Mitchell and others to be no despicable *artiste*. Innocent of lucifers and the veteran sulphur matches, the aborigine procured fire from friction of two pieces of wood. We were confidentially informed that the proper material came from the mountains, "All the same apple tree." One piece was three or four feet long, and the other much shorter. In the first, about the middle, a hole was made, and partially filled with dry bark reduced to a fine powder. Fixing one end of the larger stick against a tree for support, and holding the other end in his hand, the native rapidly moved the other pointed stick among the bark particles in the hole until smoke appeared. The Marquesan islander has a somewhat similar method. But he mounts astride one stick, while he rubs the other up and down the first until a groove be made. He quickens his motion, until fire issues from the dusty particles which the friction creates at the end of the groove.

The lazy mode of cookery is by pitching the meat on the live embers. But they cook splendidly by steam. The meat or fish is laid at the bottom of a hole upon a heated stone, and covered with clean grass. A stick stands upright upon this, while the earth is thrown into the hole. Then extracting the stick, water is poured down upon the stone, and the steam raised is kept within. The meat was sometimes laid in hollow bark to save the gravy, in the same way as the North Australians bake their turtles in the shell. A capital dish was prepared by putting the fish upon wet grass resting on the hot ashes, in alternate layers to the top of the hole. Eggs are cooked in ashes. Ants' eggs are roasted on bark slips. Though it is usual to cast the opossum or kangaroo whole upon the fire, the intestines are always extracted when warmed through; these were then washed, dressed seperately, and reserved as the choice morsel for a friend or the individual capturer of the game.

Digitized by Google

HUNTING.

Without monetary cares, without the necessity of heavy toil for the maintenance of his family, the Port Phillip native must have had a comfortable life. His lubra gathered roots, and when it suited him, rather for pastime than necessity, he would take his spear, boomerang or waddy, and soon return with a bountiful supply. Fancying an opossum, he would cut notches in the bark for his toes with a stone hatchet, quickly ascend the lofty tree, examine a hole or two in decaying limbs, twist out a fellow by the tail, and hurl him down to the dogs below. Both the emu and wild turkey are very shy, and difficult of approach. Our dark brothers, therefore, had stealthily to approach them under cover of a large green bush. One Yarra blackfellow gave us a capital description of catching the turkey. Armed with a long rod, having a noose at the end, and a little bird fastened to the top, the hunter in the moving bush nears the victim. The silly fowl walks up to the struggling captive, and pecks at him. The adroit savage watches his opportunity, and judiciously turns his rod to entrap and strangle his prize. The turkey is quietly removed, and the bait is successful with a mate. The pretty Lyre bird is more awake, and must be waddied down. Boys practised throwing at birds with a wooden instrument three feet long, terminating in an elongated egg shaped knob, which had been charred to harden it. The young urchins were expert in snoozing the wide awake Wood pigeon.

The net is an important feature in hunting. Those to entrap kangaroos on their way home along their tracks are made out of the bullrush root. Other nets are of the Wongul root. The fibres are separated by mastication. The netting needle is like a lead pencil, and round it the string is wound. No mesh is used. The string of fibres rubbed on the lubra's thigh becomes a material as neat as whipcord. The Goulburn blacks have fishing nets of a sort of grass. The Yarra tribe fish with the spear. The Murray men seek their finny friends at night, when a whole fleet may be seen, with a fire of fragrant wood in the prow of their boats. The canoe is of bark softened by fire and moulded to the shape, which is afterwards maintained until hardened by props to keep the sides apart. Such a vessel will not preserve its equilibrium

Digitized by Google

without difficulty; but every native is nearly amphibious. The Murray blacks have ingenious modes of catching the water fowl. We have seen them prowling among the reeds. A long stick with a noose projects through their ambush, and hangs over the water a tempting object. Sometimes they keep under water breathing through a reed, and draw down the ducks floating above. Or, they will float down the stream with their heads enveloped in a thick bush of leaves, until they fall in with a quacking party. Occasionally they dive down with a light spear, feel in the holes for a fish, and fix him. The hunting grounds of a tribe are known by well marked physical features in a country. Incantations were often resorted to when a grand chase was to take place.

SONGS AND DANCES.

When approaching a native camp in the evening, the traveller's ear is saluted with the monotonous tune of some forest ditty, now soft and slow, and then rapid and vehement. Without the squall and frightful time of a London ballad singer, it wants variety of cadence and intelligibility of language to suit our taste. Yet the sound is not without musical power. Simple as the notes are, they have an influence upon an excitable people, soothing their passions, arousing their vengeance, or enkindling their desire. The self congratulations of the tuneful circle are not foreign to the self-satisfied nod of the village chorister, after the *execution* of Handel or the *doing* of Bishop. If not attracted by their harmony, we are not repelled by their discord. Their measure is admirably maintained. The knocking of two sticks performs the office of Hullah's clap, and Julien's baton. The crescendo and diminuendo, the andante and allegro, are indicated and followed with accuracy and taste. Ignorance of their speech prevents the due appreciation of their lyrics. Dr. Lang, in his learned ethnological work upon the South Sea islanders, gives the following story. "A Scotch clergyman," says he, "who was settled some time ago in the interior of the Colony, and who has studied the language of the aborigines, has assured me that a black native has on one occasion repeated to him a poem, descriptive of a warlike expedition against

Digitized by Google

some hostile tribe, extending to not fewer than fifteen stanzas, and evincing poetical feeling to a considerable degree."

Some writers, as Governor Grey, Mr. Howitt and others, have given us translations, or embodied poetic sentiments of the natives in a pleasing manner. We will only venture to give two of these of local interest. One by Mr. Richard Howitt, composed in 1840, entitled "Tullamarine," giving name to a district of the county of Bourke. The other is taken from Mr. Allen's South Australian Magazine for 1842, and refers to a tradition of an overflow of the Murray river.

TULLAMARINE.

Tullamarine, thou lovely flower,
I saw thee in a happy hour;
When first I gazed upon my boy,
I saw thee with a mother's joy.

Methought thy beauty on me smiled;
And by thy name I called my child:
And thence alike with joy were seen,
Both boy and flower, Tullamarine.

The lights in heaven appear, and go:
Both stars and flowers their seasons know:
Thus, in thy season, thou art seen,
Sweet earthly star, Tullamarine.

Soother of many a weary hour,
By mountain stream, in forest bower:
I gathered thee with choicest care,
And wore thee fondly in my hair.

Wide wandering through the woods away,
Where with thy bloom the ground was gay,
I called thee then the "flower of joy,"
Sweet namesake of my darling boy.

He grew, he flourished by my side,
He ran, he gathered thee with pride;
But, woe is me! in evil hour
Death stole away my human flower.

I wonder in my sorrow's night,
My star is emptied of its light;
Thou, flower of joy, art changed to grief,
Thy dews, my tears are on thy leaf.

Therefore do I behold in vain,
Thy beauty, look on it with pain;
I see thee with an inward groan,
Because I look on thee, alone.

Digitized by Google

All things my sorrow seem to share,
There broods a sadness on the air;
There hangs a gloom along the sky,
My boy is dead, and thou shouldst die.

Now for the joy which long I had,
The sight of thee must make me sad:
So in my path no more be seen,
But, deck his grave, Tullamarine.

The Murray Tradition.

They believe that, many years ago, their own tribe, with numerous others, lived in the interior towards the N. N. E., where there was abundance of gum trees, opossums, and fresh water; that the sorcerers of the land of Toolcoon, a neighbouring country, set the bush on fire, the flames of which spread in all directions, driving the natives before it, and destroyed many tribes. Corna, the progenitor of the Murray tribes, was on the point of perishing, with his family, when the Murray burst from a cleft in the ground and extinguished the flames around them. It flowed on, till it came to the sea, and has, ever since, formed a barrier to the fire extending across the continent, as it did once in ancient times. Whether this story has any foundation in the facts of former ages, it would be vain to attempt to determine, but it is evidently based on natural causes now in existence, and in extensive operation.

TARRUNKIE.

Where is the light and the father of days,
Whither has black night, his burning face, driven;
Was it quenched in the ocean, that drank up his rays,
Or, again will he glide through the regions of heaven?

CHERABOC.

Far off, on Parnka's* distant side,
Where the lake mingles with the sky,
And farthest hills the banks divide,
Where Murray flows majesticly,
Mark thou, the brighter shades that spread,
And break the blending mists in twain;
Chase the dull clouds from Parnka's bed,
And lift morn's eyelid up again!

'Tis the sunshine,
His gleam is there,
Night doth resign
The realms of air!

* Lake Victoria.

Digitized by Google

POMEBIE.

The swan doth rise on heavy wing,
And shrilly pipes his morning note,
The meroles* from the she-oak sing,
The ducks, from lake side, slowly float;
The wary cranes, of snowy white,
Do look around with care,
And pelicans, at every height
Wing circles in the air;
The bittern booms, the blue-bird calls
His mate, with flaming crest;
The dew from every leaflet falls,
Whereon a bird did rest.

ALL.

Then let us join the happy throng;
Come, rise up black men all,
And, with the merry birds of song,
Respond to nature's call!

TARRUNKIE.

Long did our fathers wander through
The lofty gum trees' shade,
And marked the yearly falling strew
The soil, where it had stayed
Unmoved, for long, long years,
Weeping its blood-red tears.

An old wife, breathless, fled and came
Upon their paths, pressed by the flame
Of the bush fire which ran
And the hot winds did fan
Close after her, and crackled round,
Sweeping the forest to the ground,
With crash on crash, and fire and smoke
Followed her steps and thus she spoke—
"Up, Corna† up, and fly with me,
Thy children and thy wife,
If, haply, we may reach the sea,
And save our perilled life.

"From Toolcoon's distant land I come
Where fiery spirits dwell,
Who have destroyed my tribe, my home,
And seek our race to quell.

"Though many tribes of men I've passed,
That scorn my hurried word,
Yet, as the flames did follow fast,
Their dying shrieks I heard.

* Native Magpies.
† Corna signifies Black Man.

Digitized by Google

"Thine, Corna, is the only race
The angry fiends can spare,
Then, up, and with thy quickest pace,
By flight, my safety share."

Corna left spear and shield, and fled;
Each lubra seized a son,
The father took two girls and sped,
Whither their guide did run.

The sea was very far away;
Although they quickly fly,
Faster the flames pursued, and they
Thought only but to die.

The old wife, faint and weary grown
Fell down a tree beneath,
And yielding up a heavy groan,
She ceased, thenceforth, to breathe.

Whither shall Corna fly—for weak,
His lubras slowly crawl,
What place of refuge shall he seek
Against that fiery wall?

The smoke, the old wife's form concealed,
The fire came swiftly on,
The flames did reach the brain, he reeled,
And Corna's sense was gone.

A form rose from the kIndled grass,
Where the old wife had died,
And, through the burning woods did pass,
Till Corna she espied.

She stamped upon the ground, a flood
Burst from the heated soil,
Which, round about the blazing wood,
Began to hiss and boil.

The water rose, the earth did cool,
The old wife, in her hand,
Took up a little from the pool,
And sprinkled on the band.

"Corna, my son! arise, and live,
These waters, far and wide,
To thee, and to thy sons I give,
To dwell, their banks beside.

"Toolcoon shall ne'er pursue, or burn
Thee, or any children more,
This river back its flames shall turn,
E'er they approach thy shore.

"Here is a tiny, barken, boat,
Thou, with a spear, mayst guide;
Fear not, but it will safely float,
And launch it on the tide.

"Do thou, the downward stream pursue,
Until thou well canst hear
The roar of ocean, or thy view
Of its blue waves be clear.

Digitized by Google

"That is thy land, this river there,
Will spread abroad its waves;
Thine and thy children's home, where'er
Its seaward current laves.

"There make thy paths, and every child
Will follow in thy track,
But shun the inland scrubby wild,
That teems with shadows black.

"The fish, that sport with shining scale,
And all the beasts that drink.
And birds, that gaily fly and sail
About the reedy brink.

"There are enough for thee to eat,
So climb not in the tree,
That may deceive thy careful feet,
Or bruise thy active knee.

"Give thou unto this stream my name
Parnka, Ooroondooil's own,
And, when a man disputes thy claim,
Show him this charmed stone.

"His sight will fail, and dark as night,
His blighted orbs will roll,
Until he owns my Corna's right,
And Parnka's high control."

Corna sailed down the rapid stream,
For many, many miles,
At length he saw wide waters gleam,
And cliffs that loomed like isles.

The current swiftly swept across;
His bark upon the lake,
Did roughly on the billows toss,
And every fibre shake.

Till as he drew the heights between,
That form the western head,
From whence the sandy hills are seen,
That rise from ocean's bed.

He heard the roar upon the beach,
He saw the breaker's haze,
He turned his bark, in haste, to reach
A hill, to mount and gaze.

'Neath Taipang's crag, the weary man
Brought in his light canoe,
Himself and lubras cramped and wan,
Their legs they hardly knew.

Corna sat down beside his fire,
And here, upon this rock,
Was the first wurly of our sire,
The cradle of our stock.

Digitized by Google

Dancing is the music of the feet, the poetry of movement. It is associated with social gatherings and religious worship. There have been sacred dances among the Egyptians, Greeks, Buddhists, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians. Whatever connection some dances of the Australian natives may have originally had with idolatrous ceremonies, we are sure that the spirit of them has long since departed. We have our Kangaroo dance, Emu dance, Frog dance, &c. The ancient Celts held moonlight corrobories. Layard witnessed a night dance among the devil worshippers of Assyria. The Dyaks of Borneo have a similar practice with our aborigines. The Indians of America, like these, terminated their dances with a loud "Waugh!" But a simple sketch of the author's observations of a Corrobory, may interest those who arrive in the Colony, to behold a scattered, deteriorated, spiritless, and decimated people.

The moon is full; and the hills that had glared in the noontide heat, and sympathised with the declining sun in varying hues of gold, of purple, and of ashey grey, now softly sleep in the calm and holy light. The Laughing Jackass has carolled his farewell note, and the Bat mysteriously flits its eccentric course, when from the valley there rises a sound unlike any other, which tells of departing sympathies and a departing race. We go nearer—there, amidst that dusky mass, we distinguish the plaintive chant, the tapping of time sticks, and the muffled murmur of opossum rug drums. Various companies are sitting round small fires, occasionally bursting into blaze as dry boughs or a few leaves are laid on the embers. Women have folded their rugs and placed them between their thighs, and now beat them with the open palm of their hand. Some are seated cross-legged, singing a mournful dirge, with their eyes downward and with a melancholy aspect. There is no interruption, for the tune subdues the loquacity of the loquacious tribe. A livelier air succeeds; the old men beat their sticks quicker, the tum tum is louder, the eyes brighten, a laugh now and then interludes, the prattling begins, and with the last sharp, shrill chord rushes in a tumult of noisy merriment.

But the Corrobory is to begin. Certain important looking old gentlemen are gliding about, consulting and giving directions about the fête. The performers see that the pipe-clay lines of beauty

Digitized by Google

upon their bodies are in proper order, redaubing where necessary. After an amount of fussing, coquetting, fidgetting, and confusion, worthy of a more civilised reunion, there is a fall to places. The ladies squat near the fires, clear their throats for a song, and give an extra tightening to their drums. The old men sit or stand in groups. The young men spring blithely into the centre, accompanied by an involuntary Ha! Ha! of admiration from the throng of ebon beauties. Some little bantering passages between the sexes are silenced by the seniors, in growls from their white haired lords, and spiteful snappings from the shrivelled hags of mammas. Silence is called. The ranks are formed. The moon's beams rest upon the naked performers. With bunches of gum leaves in their hands, and others round their ankles, like flying Mercuries, the dancing men are ready. The band strikes up. Slowly moving their bodies from side to side, the young men gracefully and tremulously move their hands to the measure. At a signal, the legs commence a similar motion, having a most grotesque and unnatural appearance. The flesh of the thigh and calf is seen quivering in an extraordinary manner. This excites deep interest in the spectators. Exclamations of delight issue from the eager witnesses of the performance, at some peculiarly charming and difficult wriggling of limb. After sundry chasseeing, the men break their line, rush together in a mass, without disorder or confusion, leap upward in the air, wave their boughs over their head, utter a loud "Waugh," and, bursting into laughter, join in a melée of chattering, and receive the hearty congratulations of their friends. Some of the enthusiastic females persist in grasping our hand, and pointing to the distinguished actors, with a roguish, merry leer, crying out, "Very good that corrobory; very good blackfellow; you give him sixpence?"

Bathed in perspiration, the young men obtain a drink, stretch themselves upon the dewy grass, and take a *spell*. But the ancients have arranged for another dance, of a different movement from the other, and the *stand up* process is re-enacted. The interest is renewed, and the lady of night floats on her silvery way over a great arch of the heavens, before the corrobory is over, the wirlie filled, and the dancer at rest.

Digitized by Google

Occasionally they have a pretty game, something like our hoop. One will take a tuft of Emu feathers in his hand, and go off to a little distance. Then, holding aloft the feathers, he would plunge into the forest, or dodge among the women, pursued by a lot of young men. Now and then the shaking of the trophy would be seen in the twilight shade, as the bearer managed to elude observation, and again came into view. Tumultuous mirth followed the successful capture. A young fellow is noticed led by two others into the camp. The evidence of intense agony, as from some terrible accident, is as strong on the form of the one, as that of sympathising solicitude on the features of the others, while tenderly supporting their friend. The camp fires are deserted, and anxious faces gather round the group; when all at once the lame man leaps up with a whirr—r—, his carriers burst into laughter at the sucess of the deception, and a long and pleasant yabber is the result. The dances of the women are intended for the amusement of the other sex, and are not more remarkable for chaste propriety than the celebrations of some more refined communities.

One of the finest corrobories was witnessed by W. Hull, Esq., J.P., on April 22, 1845, when a party of 800 visited Melbourne at the full moon. A huge edifice, (if so it may be called,) of stringy bark branches was constructed, and divers rude hieroglyphics were daubed by the old men, who alone penetrated within this Adytum. In the morning, nothing was to be seen. A superior corrobory took place in 1839, on the Eastern Hill, opposite to the site of the *Argus* office. Another curious performance, with a dim shadowing of meaning, was witnessed in 1842. Fifty men, with bunches of leaves reeled in serpentiue motion, hissing as they went. Their arms were laid over the shoulders of others, who sang a mysterious song. Arrived at a certain place, they all set up a "Waugh," and ran full speed back to the wirlies. A new line was formed, and new decorations prepared. Wands were placed in their hands, ornamented with the down of cockatoos and green boughs. A series of singular boundings succeeded, with the aforesaid hissing. Again the whole party of dancers and singers were observed in rapid flight toward the creek, yelling and hallooing on the road. They halted at a bark hut, on the sides of

Digitized by Google

which were ochre drawings in the shape of shields. After other rapid evolutions, they threw their wands upon the roof, with air-rending cries. The white men were told that this was not a corrobory, but a *Gageed*. Mr. Parker gives an account of a *Yepene*, or Dance of Death, upon the Loddon. It is a movement beneath boughs. A solemn lengthened silence is then maintained in the darkness of night. A sudden exclamation of joy, with mutual kind congratulations, close the scene. Might not this have some dreamy resemblance to the Egyptians mourning for the death of Osiris, and their gladness for his recovery? A grand site of native gathering was near Mount Macedon, where there are many massive basaltic columns, some twenty feet high, the stones of which have a convex base and a concave top. Here, amidst the magnificence of nature, with the moon piercing the shade of a gum forest, and lighting up as a fairy scene the amphitheatre of romantic looking mountains, the tribes would assemble in friendly greetings, and enjoy their soul-stirring corrobories.

We were much struck one evening with an unearthly uproar, arising from a large native camp. Yells were intermingled with the tum tum of rugs and the barking of dogs. Running hastily to the place, we saw the men naked as for a corrobory, sitting at a distance in two large circles, with their eyes to the ground, silent and motionless. Not a sound was to be heard from the women and children; but from one of the wirlies a low moan proceeded. We walked to the spot, and saw a poor creature in dying agonies. Presently every man left the ground. Thinking our presence was not required at such a season, we retired also. In about half an hour the party reassembled, and a furious corrobory ensued. Doubtless the death struggles had closed, and the natives sought to dispel their gloom in the excitement of the dance.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

The native women in their wild state are seldom much encumbered with clothes. As in New Guinea the young females only have a covering, and that but a very slight one, so the Australian ladies are similarly unadorned. Travellers declare that innocence

Digitized by Google

is perfectly compatible with such an apparent breach of decorum. Major Mitchell found the Port Phillip lubras unconscious of any impropriety in their appearance. Some had a kind of basket work to protect their backs from the cold, while they saw no occasion to provide shelter elsewhere. The personal aspect of the females is sometimes repulsive, they being far inferior to men in physical developement. Short in stature, extremely attenuated in form, with elongated and flaccid mammæ, stubble like hair, thick lips, and no Egyptian cleanliness, they rather resemble the Hottentot Venus, than the ideal De Medici. One cause of this inferiority to the males may be their very early marriages, their hard usage, and as hard a fare. We have been favoured, however, with glances at decided exceptions to this dark picture. Some six years ago the Murray tribe visited their Adelaide friends. Among the river Aborigines was a young female about sixteen years of age, who was possessed of such charms as to elicit universal admiration. Her form was as delicately and beautifully rounded as that of a Circassian dame. Her breasts were spherical, her hair parted in glossy ringlets, her mouth exhibited a noble show of ivory, her head was thoroughly Caucasian in shape, her eyes—those brilliant, wicked, restless orbs, with thin long, black, voluptuous lashes, completed her fascinating appearance. Her opossum rug was worn with the taste of a drawing room belle. The occasional coquettish fall of her robe to expose her beauty, with the half bashful, half delighted gaze at the spectator, when she discovered her wilful and naughty inadvertence, would be worthy the imitation of the most temptatious light of a Harem.

The female Aborigine seldom bore a large family ; Buckley says not often more than six. Old colonists speak of small tribes of a score of individuals, fourteen or fifteen of whom would be children. But what a frightful change must have come over the dark woman, when we learn that last year only two native children were born in an area of thousands of square miles, in the Portland Bay district? The young mother has not much preparation for her hour of sorrow, no length of sufferings, and no repose after deliverance. A mixture of charcoal and fat is rubbed over the skin of the newborn, as a defence against insects and the heat. The tribe cannot wait for

Digitized by Google

her, the next day she is on the trail. The half castes are few; even in 1846 Mr. Robinson only knew of from 20 to 30. One of the loveliest children we ever beheld was a half caste infant on the banks of the Murray. With a rich bronze colour, soft curly hair, and chubby, ruddy cheeks, he had the sparkling eyes of his really pretty mother. One roguish little fellow of some fifteen months would peep over the lubra's shoulder when a white man or woman passed, and holding out its tiny hand, would laughingly whine in English "gib me copper." The young folks of a camp are full of fun. Although the father seldom condescends to a romp, the maternal feelings are in all their natural play. We have repeatedly spent an hour in watching their happy gambols. Once asking a native to send her child to the Black School, she answered sorrowfully, "No, no, no, me plenty cry." Though the lubra may now and then get a tap with a waddy for want of assiduity in procuring her coolie a good dinner, or for being too chattingly familiar with a young man, it is very rare that a child is struck; the demonstration of temper is admired in the boy, as an evidence of future warlike spirit. Kind, however, as the mother is to her offspring, she has another favorite, on whom she lavishes her caresses. No lubra is seen without a pack of hungry, spotted, dirty, mangey dogs, whose pups share with her own child her lactary blessing. A friend told us he once saw outside of Melbourne, a native woman suckling in their turns a little boy and four puppies.

MARRIAGES.

The old story is, that when a young man wanted a wife, he lay in wait for a girl, sprang upon her like a tiger, felled her senseless with his club, and dragged her off bleeding to his lair. We need hardly say that this is a gross calumny upon the native character. The process of courtship among them is about what it is with us. What is called the throwing of sheep's eyes is the usual preliminary of attack, followed by importunity, coyness, ardent avowals, and bashful pleasure. There is one lamentable deficiency in their love makings, which will dispose every sentimental youth and lassie to consign them irretrievably to the doom of baboons; we allude to

Digitized by Google

their incomprehensible non-appreciation of the mysteries of a kiss! The New Zealander and his neighbours have an agreeable substitute for labial embraces—they rubbed noses; the strength of a lover's attachment was estimated by the force of a cartilaginous pressure. But our benighted Aborigines had not even this nasal consolation.

We received from a respected widower, who had passed the fearful ordeal, a faithful and vivid description of a native courtship, which we immediately transferred to paper, in language as similar to his own as we could recollect. First telling us that if not previously engaged to a young unweaned lady, according to the fashion, the young man sought a partner from a neighbouring tribe. He would join them at a visit, and sit down at the family fire; selecting that particular hearth graced by the presence of some youthful beauty. Thus the courtship begins, according to our authority:—"Young man sit down, very fine young man, see one woman, very fine young woman. She look at him, say, 'very fine young man.' He look at her, say, 'very fine young woman.' He talk to her; she talk to him; then plenty one talk, one day, many day. Then he say, 'I like you my wife.' She say, 'I like you my husband.' Then he say, 'you go when me ready?' She say, 'me go when you ready.' By and by she say, 'when you ready?' Then she talk one woman, all the same friend. She say, 'very nice young man, you go along him his country?' One day, young man walk about. Two women walk about, plenty long way. Then fine young woman she take hand fine young man, run away plenty fast his own country. By and bye, big one angry that young woman father. Tribe come young man tribe. Plenty spear and boomerang. So Blackfellow get wife."

The system of early bethrothment prevails, as in most countries of the world, and as it prevailed among the civilised nations of Christian Europe not a long time ago. As polygamy was sanctioned among these tribes, as among almost all nomadic people, from the time of Bedouin Abraham to that of the present roving Tartars, the grown folks got more of such promised favours than the juveniles. Hence it was that old men might be seen with youthful wives, while strapping young fellows were portionless. When we sympathised with the latter upon their forlorn condition, the usual

Digitized by Google

response was, "Never mind, plenty lubra one day." Some of these Turks managed to have four or five ladies, who contrived to plague the old fellows most woefully. In sheer desperation, they have been known to make a present to a friend of some shrivelled, ancient partner, who would foolishly complain of the advent of another into the establishment. The man with two wives, if they will only tolerably agree, lives a jolly life, as he has a couple of providers. The condition of a junior wife is often one of great hardship, from the jealousy and cruelty of her senior.

Dr. Palmer, the Speaker of the Council of Victoria, was lately relating to us an illustration of the misery of polygamy. A young woman, who had been servant in his family for several years, and had proved industrious, affectionate, and thoroughly well conducted, receiving not only the advantages of secular instruction but those of religious training, was afterwards obliged to marry an old man to whom she had been bethrothed, and who had already another wife. No longer clad, and living as a civilised and a christian woman, she was now a wanderer with her besotted husband, amidst the filth, exposure, and depravity of a native camp. But even this system is preferable to that of the South Sea Islands, in which one woman has two or more husbands.

In the event of a girl, unbetrothed, being without a father, her brother took charge of that property, and bestowed it on whom he pleased. Sometimes men would exhibit friendship by a change of sisters. But the favorite mode was that of courtship in another tribe. This subjected the parties to a little harmless fighting, and a good corrobory made all friends again. Sometimes they adopted the old English system of trial by wager of battle. The aggrieved parties demanded justice of the eloper's tribe. The young man stood forth naked at a fixed distance, armed defensively with a shield. The friend of the stolen lady then threw a certain number of spears, one after the other; these were to be parried off through the activity of the Gretna Greener. Sometimes a flesh wound would be received, but this was a rare case. If not satisfied, or, if such were the agreement, the same number of boomerangs were next hurled. Having made the requisite atonement, justice was

Digitized by Google

declared satisfied; and the hero walked up to his lady love, received her formally from her tribe, and, amidst universal congratulations, bore off his prize.

As among the ancient Jews, the wife was always transferred to the brother of the deceased husband. A widow was obliged to wait two weeks before another match; a widower was not subjected to such restraint. Before a regular marriage takes place between a native and his betrothed one, the mother of the girl must on no account look upon the face of her intended son-in-law, else her hair would immediately turn grey. Therefore, great care was exercised by the gentleman to avoid her presence. While the man could dispense with the services of his helpmate, his other half had not equal previleges. It was not so in Poyn, according to old Marco Polo, for there if a husband was absent from home for twenty days, his wife was allowed to select another protector; or, as in Nair, according to the same authority, where women of rank were betrothed in infancy, but afterwards permitted to select a home companion away from her partner. Cases of adultery were in former times visited with vengeance in Australia. Buckley tells us that it was a great disgrace to have an illegitimate child, who was almost certain to be killed. The domestic life of the Aborigines differs from ours. When retiring for the night, the husband rolls himself up in his rug with his feet to the fire; and on the other side, it may be, the wife, similarly enveloped, composes herself to sleep. On one occasion only did we meet with husband and wife beneath the same coverlid in European fashion.

Governor Grey has very prettily hit off a piece of family history, in the shape of a squabble between an ancient lubra and her lord, about the latter introducing another spouse into the household:—

Wherefore came ye, Weerang,
In my beauty's pride,
Stealing cautiously
Like the tawny boreang (wild dog),
On an unwilling bride.
'Twas thus you stole me
From one that loved me tenderly!
A better man he was than thee,
Who having forced me thus to wed,
Now so oft deserts my bed.
Yang, yang, yang, yoh!

Digitized by Google

O where is he that won
My youthful heart,
Who oft' used to bless
And call me loved one;
You Weerang tore apart
From his fond caress
Her whom you now desert and shun;
Out upon thee, faithless one;
O may the Boyl-yas bite and tear
Her, whom you take your bed to share.
Yang, yang, yang, yoh!

Wherefore does she slumber
Upon thy breast
Once again to-night,
Whilst I must number
Hours of sad unrest and broken plight?
Is it for this that I rebuke
Young men, who dare at me to look?
While she, replete with arts and wiles
Dishonours you, and still beguiles.

THE HUSBAND RETORTS.

Oh! you lying artful one!
Wag away your dirty tongue;
I have watched your tell tale eyes
Beaming love without disguise;
I've seen young Imbat nod and wink
Oftener perhaps than you may think.

Blows with the waddy, followed by a shrill cry, close this dialogue.

INFANTICIDE AND CANNIBALISM.

The destruction of children arises not from a want of maternal affection, but from the will of the tribe, the difficulty of following roving husbands with infants, and the want of natural food for such offspring. The last reason is a strong one. The character of native food is unsuitable to very young children. These depend upon their mother for a period of twice or thrice the time of Europeans. Mr. Wedge wrote of our Blacks in 1835, "They have another custom, namely, that of destroying their new born children, if born before the former child has reached the age of three or four years, until which time they are not weaned." Buckley is made to say, "So soon as they have as many as they can conveniently carry about and provide for them, they kill the rest immediately after birth; not to eat them, but with the idea, that, for the sake of both parties, and under such circumstances,

Digitized by Google

death is practical mercy." Again, upon the same authority, we learn, "If a family increases too rapidly, they hold a consultation among the tribe she belongs to, as to whether it shall live or not; but if the father insists upon the life of the child being spared, they do not persist in its destruction." It appears to have been also the custom, when a woman was promised to one man but given to another, to kill the first child. If two were born at a birth, one was usually strangled. Humboldt mentions the same thing of the Guiana Indians; though that was because it was so much like rats to have two at a time. Mr. Assistant Protector Parker adds another reason for the practice, reflecting on the women; "because they feared to get prematurely old and unacceptable to their husbands." The fearful crime of producing abortion by pressure was not uncommon, especially after a quarrel between man and wife. Dr. Ross has this statement in his almanac for 1836: "One female, the wife of Nullaboid was pointed out to Mr. Wedge, as having destroyed ten out of eleven of her children." Mr. Protector Thomas talks despairingly of the practise, alleging that the natives have lost heart, and wish to have no children live after them, because they have no country now. The half castes have almost always been killed. A woman when appealed to about it, simply answered, "No good, all the same warrigal," or, like wild dog. Mr. Briarty of the Upper Yarra lately saved a half caste from destruction by his entreaties. A lubra speaking to us upon the subject frankly exclaimed: "Blackfellow kill 'em plenty white picaninny." They have been known to acknowledge the murder of infants, on the plea, "What for picaninny, white fellow shoot 'em when 'em young man."

Cannibalism is a revolting practice, but belonging to all ages, and almost all countries. We need not be too hard upon the Port Phillip Black, when we remember that our own forefathers, the Saxons, as well as the Britons, were equally guilty of this crime. Many nations of antiquity devoured the dead of their enemies. The human sacrifices of Mexico were eaten. Not only the New Zealanders, but all the South Sea Islanders were fond of such flesh; also many tribes of Africa, South America, Borneo, and New Guinea. The like foul habit existed in Japan, Tartary, and South

Digitized by Google

Eastern China. Old Sir John Mandeville talks of certain Mongols relishing men's ears "soused in vynegre." Marco Polo gives a narrative of coming to one place where they suffocated the dying, and ate their friends. "When dressed," says that traveller, "the relatives assemble, and, in a convivial manner, eat the whole of it, not leaving so much as the marrow in the bones." Grievous trouble would come to the deceased if not thus absolutely devoured. There is an allusion to cannibalism in Lev. xxvi. 29.

Our blackfellows have long been accused of this crime. Mr. Wedge, in his visit before the Whites settled here, wrote as follows:—"The natives are Cannibals, but they do not indulge in this horrible propensity except in times of war, when the bodies of those who are killed are roasted and eaten. They make no secret of this barbarous custom, but speak of it as a matter of course, and coolly describe their manner of preparing the repast, the process of which is too revolting to commit to paper." We give a quotation from Buckley: "The mangled remains of the man were roasted between heated stones, and they ate part of them, and no mistake." Speaking of another, he says, "The remains were shared out, and greedily devoured." We have from the same authority, an account of the murder of a deformed child, the brother of whom was compelled to eat of its flesh, to prevent some evil happening to it. In Mr. Morgan's life of Buckley, occurs the following remarkable story of a Port Phillip tribe. "In my wanderings, I met with the Pallidurgbarrans, a tribe notorious for their cannibal practices; not only eating human flesh greedily after a fight, but on all occasions when it was possible. They appeared to be the nearest approach to the brute creation of any I had ever seen or heard of, and, in consequence, they were very much dreaded. Their color was light copper, their bodies having tremendously large and protruding bellies. Huts or artificial places of shelter were unknown to them, it being their custom to lay about in the scrub, any how and any where. Their brutality at length became so harassing, and their assaults so frequent, that it was resolved to set fire to the bush where they had sheltered themselves, and so annihilate them, one and all, by suffocation. This in part succeeded, for I saw no more of them in my time."

Digitized by Google

Mr. Assistant Protector Sievwright describes a woman being cut open, the blood drank, part of the flesh eaten raw, and the other roasted. Dr. Thomson sent the head of a baked child to the Edinburgh Museum. The Murray natives never ate the head, but threw that into the river. An old colonist informed us that a lady friend of his was a great favourite with the Yarra Blacks, from a belief that she was the risen appearance of one of their own people; consequently, she had secrets told her that were withheld from others. One day a lubra came to her with something under her blanket; she then produced a piece of a cooked child, requesting the lady not to tell. Mr. Sutherland was our informant about a cannibal scene, when a party was after poor Mr. Gellibrand in 1837. The Barrabool tribe had captured an old man and a young girl belonging to the Lake Colac tribe, whom they had unjustly charged with the murder of their friend Gellibrand. The child was killed and roasted, and the fat employed for macassar oil. Some of the warm flesh was laughingly offered to the Englishmen; Dr. Cotter, we believe, brought away part of the thigh as an evidence of the fact. Half a dozen children, left as a pledge of friendship with the wild Gipps Land tribe, were killed and devoured by their careful guardians. In Mr. Fawkner's Geelong Adventures of April, 1841, is a notice of some such feast, when two lubras affectionately tendered a choice smoking morsel to the Protector.

WEAPONS.

Mr. Tuckey in 1803, considered the native's spear harmless against the kangaroo. But the weapon is not to be despised in the hand of a strong man. Upon the Murray the light spear is called a Kiko; the oval shield, a Hieleman; the Wommera or throwing stick, applied to the spear as a lever for accelerating its motion, a Nga-waouk; the short, knobbed stick, a Bwirris. Buckley tells us that the Yarra Blacks called the jagged spear a Karnwell; the hunting spear, a Daar; the Boomerang, a Wangaara; the two shields, Malka and Seaugwell. The latter is narrow, with a knob, and is used offensively. The Malka, to ward off blows, is two or

Digitized by Google

three feet long, and is provided with a handle. These are made of bark or red gum. The Nella or Waddy is a stout stick. The Langiel is a stick with an elbow, which served as a sort of halbert. The jagged spear is furnished with pieces of angular quartz, stuck on with gum; about a week is necessary to harden it. The spear is of Iron bark or Box. The Throwing Stick, in a socket of which the spear end rested when poised, is made of Cherry tree or Wattle.

RELIGION AND MISSIONS.

Religious ideas are a guage of development. Centralization of a race begets a regular system of worship, definite creeds, and established sacerdotal arrangements. A people dependent upon priestley administrations for the services of religion, may soon degenerate in pious fervour when deprived of that agency. The ancestors of our Australian tribes may have mingled in gorgeous celebrations of worship, and bowed to multiplied and complicated mysteries. But when isolated by any cause from communion with others, or, expatriated, wandering in mere families over distant and strange countries, early associations would gradually lose their force, and traditions be less regarded. Thus the hunting tribes of New Holland became worshipless.

Attempts have been made to show that they had a conception of Deity and of another state. But it is passing strange that the vagaries of one people were wholly unknown to their neighbours, and that interesting legends narrated by some should be perfectly new to others of their own tribe. We strongly suspect that many of these traditions are but concocted yarns to excite the wonder of a white visitor. We have taken some pains during the last fifteen years to ascertain from missionaries, settlers and natives, whether they were acquainted with the Supreme Being before the white man came. The result of our enquiries is a reply in the negative. They were a godless, prayerless race. The New Zealanders and South Sea Islanders, on the contrary, were not so. Before they launched their canoes for fishing, they addressed their Deities for protection and success. This development of the reverential was an auxiliary to missionary enterprize. Far different is it with

Digitized by Google

Fuegians and Australians, whose sentiment of veneration was certainly objectless, and who, therefore, cannot be charged with the sin of idolatry. Their non appreciation of religion is sometimes exhibited in a painfully ludicrous light. A boy who had been taught the Lord's Prayer one day remarked to his teacher a practical difficulty in his scholastic career. He said, that when out in a desert where food was scarce, he had often repeated "Give us this day our daily bread," and yet no 'possum came; observing, as he walked away, "Plenty gammon all that yabber." One who had quietly endured a long discourse at a mission station in the hope of a good *tuck out*, was very much disgusted at the small donation he received, and thus vented his spleen: "No good that: plenty one big yabber, picaninny plour" (flour). It was no adequate return for the patience and forbearance he had manifested.

With a sincere recognition of the universal adaptation of the principles of Christianity to the exigencies of fallen humanity, yet we are almost disposed to regard as hopeless, under present circumstances, any endeavours to convert the New Holland Aborigines. Analogies are so wanting, associations are so unfortunate, native customs are so passively antagonistic, and the very genius of religion is so foreign to their natures, that no decided results of teaching can be expected within two generations. In the meantime the race is silently passing away childless!

There have not been wanting some feeble efforts to christianize the natives of Port Phillip and the neighbouring colony of New South Wales. But all such attempts have failed. Besides difficulties previously mentioned, there were other powerful antagonisms —the restlessness of the people, the active opposition of some settlers, and the bad example and teaching of many white men. We were assured by a clergyman, that he once caught an Englishman deliberately instructing an Aborigine in the mysteries of profane swearing. The old colony had been settled above thirty years, before it was thought worth while to enquire about the souls of the race whose lands were held. Then successively arose the following missions: Native Institution, 1821; Lake Macquarie Mission, 1827; Church of England Mission at Wellington Valley, 1836; German Mission at Moreton Bay, 1838. In Port Phillip

Digitized by Google

a station on the Yarra, at the site of the Botanical Gardens, was formed under Mr. George Langhorne soon after the arrival of Capt. Lonsdale, in 1836. The Wesleyan Mission at Buntingdale, on the Barwon, some forty miles west of Geelong, was initiated in 1836. The missionaries were Messrs. Hurst and Tuckfield. The sums granted by the government toward its support, were as follows:— 1836, £221; 1837, £664; 1838, £1460; 1839, £631; 1840, £795; 1841, £450; 1842, £315; &c. A worthy effort was made by the Baptist body in Melbourne in 1845, to gather some native children together. The Rev. Thomas Ham, and Messrs. Lush and Kerr were its active promoters. An establishment was made on a tongue of land at the junction of the Merri Creek and Yarra. Mr. Peacock was the first teacher; he was succeeded by Mr. Edgar. In 1846 there were 14 boys and 7 girls. The mission lasted but a few years; it was found impracticable to retain the children, because of the parents wishing them to follow them, and because the men sought the fellowship of the coloured young ladies at the Mission House. Assaults have been made upon the nunnery, and the not vestal virgins in a most Sabine manner have been withdrawn, with the smiling consent of the abducted. Yet fruits were not wanting; some acquired a good knowledge of arithmetic, &c. and most could read in our New Testament. The singing was admired. Mr. Kerr supplied us with an ancedote of this Merri Creek Establishment, which illustrated the maternal feeling. Having brought the children to Town for examination at the Baptist Chapel, they were provided with beds in Melbourne that night, because it was too late to go home. But their absence was soon known at the native camp, and some mischievous person spread the report of the children being kidnapped and conveyed on ship-board en route for *whitefellow's country*. Early in the morning the town was filled with lamentations; ebon Rachels weeping for their children. To satisfy them, they were brought before the youths, when mothers ran with streaming eyes toward their offspring, fondled over them, and exhibited the wildest demonstration of joy.

The Yarra Establishment under Mr. Langhorne was of short continuance. That gentleman officiated as a sort of protector as well as missionary, receiving a salary of £150. He was assisted

Digitized by Google

by Mr. John Thomas Smith, at present the Mayor of Melbourne, who then acted as Schoolmaster to the Blacks upon a stipend of £40 a year.

We have the following interesting account of the Institution, from the pen of Mr. Backhouse, the Quaker Missionary, in company with his friend Mr. George Washington Walker, in November, 1837. "Last night, we returned with our friends to the Missionary Station, to lodge. The reserve for the Missionary Institution is of 800 acres. This, though but a small extent of land for a pastoral country, was considered sufficient to devote to the object, at so short a distance from the town. The buildings are temporary ones, of mud and plaister, with thatched roofs; they are not yet sufficiently extensive to accommodate the mission family, and twelve native boys who are already under tuition. The design is, to educate them in English, and to teach them useful occupations, and then to let them mix themselves with the European population; with whom it is hoped, by these means, to put them upon a level."

In April, 1844, the Church of England Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent, through Lord Stanley, at the suggestion of the Melbourne Branch, the following proposition to our Sydney Authorities—Port Phillip then being a Province of New South Wales. Lamenting over the moral destitution of Europeans and Aborigines, they undertook to provide for the religious instruction of both parties, on condition of receiving a moiety of support from the Government, and the use of the so called Village Reserves. This offer was not accepted by our Colonial rulers, who questioned the propriety of giving such advantages to one denomination of Christians, especially the control of Village Reserves, in which Townships might some day be established. A pleasing endeavour is now being made to convert the Aborigines by a Church of England Society. Their two missionaries are stationed toward the junction of the Darling and Murray. The Moravian teachers near Lake Boga have been compelled to return home, chiefly through the opposition of some of their squatting neighbours.

Though the natives may be inaccessible to dogmatic teaching upon the mysteries of our faith, they can understand the comforting

Digitized by Google

belief in a future of happiness. Thus a female friend of ours was once talking with a lubra pensioner. She enquired after the health of William the sick husband of the dark mendicant. "Him plenty bad—him tumble down soon" (die) was the sorrowful reply. A question was asked as to the future lot of departed Aborigines. "Him go plenty long way—come up whitefellow," answered the lubra. Full of kindness toward the wandering, neglected ones, the good lady unfolded to the benighted creature the way of salvation. Rapt in attention, she listened to all until she heard that if she were good and her husband good, she would meet him in happy Heaven. Throwing up her arms, and with her eyes streaming with tears, she exclaimed, "Me see William again, oh! that plenty good—very good—me see William—me see William again." The christianity of the affections has charms for even opossum clad Australians.

SUPERSTITIONS.

Superstition accompanies ignorance. The savage who will face a raging lion, trembles at a shadow. Want of knowledge leads us to imagine absurd causes of things, and to rely upon ideal agencies for relief. Hence crude notions of philosophy, and the use of charms. We will refer to some of the foolish superstitions of the Port Phillip Blacks. As before intimated, we must not confound any of these with religious ideas, because they seem to have a connection more or less remote with the supernatural.

Our dark friends seldom quitted the camp fire at night, for fear of encountering malignant spirits; we know of more refined people of more than one sex, who have similar timidity at the witching hour of night. They have as much respect for their Doctors or Sorcerers, as many of our London maidens have for fortune telling Astrologers. A friend of ours saw an odd ceremony performed by one of these gentlemen on three sable ladies laden with future cares. They stood before him in usual native undress. He looked at each attentively, catching the eye of the person. Drawing back to a stump, he uttered an incantation. Then advancing to the women, he blew on their bodies. This was repeated several times.

Digitized by Google

It was doubtless intended to procure safety and deliverance in the forthcoming hour of suffering. Kidney fat worn round the neck was a wonderful preservative against evil. Mr. Eyre mentions that the Murray Boylyas or Doctors used to carry upon state occasions a stick ornamented with feathers; he conjured rain by certain crystals, and charmed death away with a sacred dagger. Evil spirits may be driven out of the air by divers means. Peter the Great ordered all Russian bells to be rung, to frighten away the devil that enabled the Swedes to beat him at Narva. In the wilds of Port Phillip they had a simpler contrivance. The Doctor seized the Mooyum Karr, a piece of oval board with a string attached to it, and with a few hearty, whirring swings would effectually purify the atmosphere from the presence of such malignities. Man making is attended with several mysterious and often torturing ceremonies, varying according to the tribe. Different nations and religions have analogous celebrations of the youth assuming manhood. The American Indian and South Sea Islander undertake their solemn duties at the age of fourteen or fifteen. The initiation of youth among our Blackfellows takes place in the darkness of night, the seclusion of the forest, and in the absence of the women. Like as with the Egyptian and Greek mysteries, the noviciate undergoes considerable suffering during the process. Previously and afterwards for several days he must eat of nothing prepared by the hand of a female. The Indian is similarly restricted. Among some Port Phillip tribes the hair is plucked out by the roots from certain parts of the body, and green leaves placed under the arm pits. Charmed pebbles placed in a bag are to be worn round the neck, and never exhibited to a woman; the dust of these stones has great virtue in sickness. Other masonic intelligence is to be withheld from the less sacred, or more taletelling sex. Occasionally a lad is smothered with mud, and has his hair nearly all shaved off. With some he is said to be sent to the Kipper Grounds. One tribe will place the boy upon a man's shoulders, and the friend will pierce his own chest to let blood fall upon his youthful ward. Incantations are constantly being employed by the old men. After all this, the youth may adorn his hair with two kangaroo teeth and emu feathers. The effect of the ceremony

Digitized by Google

upon lads is to make them more than ever devoted to the customs of the tribes. There is no doubt but that the exhibition of certain cabalistic signs by a passer by, has caused many a steady, hopeful servant to throw up his charge, change his trousers for a dirty blanket, and the hut for a wirlie.

The "Jump up Whitefellow" doctrine is odd enough. Buckley's life was saved because he was believed to be the embodied spirit of a deceased friend of the tribe. Mr. Wedge wrote in 1835, "They certainly entertain the idea that after death, they will again exist in the form of white men;" though he thinks it an idea borrowed from the whites. It is not without consolation to the savage; for, when one was being swung off on the Melbourne gallows, he exclaimed, "Very good: me jump up whitefellow: plenty sixpence." The belief is not confined to Port Phillip; Captain Grey, when in Western Australia, was recognised and most affectionately greeted and claimed as a returned son by an uncommonly ugly old lubra. A gentleman of Moonie Ponds told us, that while down in Port Fairy district, an old woman recognized in his little girl a departed daughter of hers. There is an evident relation here to the Asiatic doctrine of the transmigration of souls. The Buddhist records inform us respecting a certain sanctified priest, who made his spirit enter the body of a man dead, to personate a character. The several incarnations of Vishun have relation to it. The most distinguished men of learning and philosophy in England, America, France and Germany are obtaining fresh light upon the nature of the soul. They do not see why the soul that was in Socrates may not reappear in some more modern savant; in short, there is reason to hope, that with a little more study, those leaders of the intellect of the Old World will arrive at the standard of mind as existing in the rude Port Phillip savage, and honestly avow their conviction of the truth of that sublime dogma, "Jump up Whitefellow."

Among the superstitions has been placed their belief in the fabulous Bunyip. This monster was said to issue from the lakes, and carry off children, and even women; the natives never attempted to kill one. Yet Buckley believed he saw one, the size of a calf. Some early stockkeepers asserted the presence of a

Digitized by Google

large amphibious animal, covered with hair. But since the more complete settlement of the country, the Bunyip has disappeared, to dwell with the banished ghosts and fairies of the olden time. Among other notions, is that of some spirit stealing down a tree at night, when the fire goes out, and so causing the death of the party. Yet little dependence is to be placed upon this assertion, for the natives invariably seek in more substantial beings than ghosts the means of revenging such death. Sometimes upon the departure of one of the tribe, the others will describe a circle on the ground, place an insect within the ring, observe the direction in which it crawls, and, running on in that direction, will kill the first strange Blackfellow they meet, take away his kidney fat, and rub it over their bodies.

There is an allusion to this agency in the following pleasingly rendered song:—

Muldaubie, thy ill-omened cry
Troubles the sleeper's ear;
But if thy shadow meets his eye,
He knows that death is near.
Begone, our boys we need,
To throw the quivering spear;
And let their young limbs bleed
For all they hold most dear.
Then turn thy evil form away
From where the Black man roams,
Nor come at eve or dawn of day
To desolate their homes.

Buckley thus describes their belief of the origin of fire. "Their notion," says he, "of the origin of fire is this, that as a native woman was digging at an ant hill one day, for the purpose of getting their eggs for eating, a crow flying over dropped something like dry grass, which immediately blazed and set a tree on fire. For this reason they very much respect the Waakee, as they call the bird, and do not kill and eat it unless pressed by necessity." Mr. Morgan professes to gain from the same person a description of the Creation theory; which is as follows: "They have a notion that the earth is supported by props, which are in the care of a man, who lives at the furthest end of the earth. They were dreadfully alarmed on one occasion when I was with them, by news

Digitized by Google

passed from tribe to tribe, that unless they could send him a supply of tomahawks for cutting some more props with, and some more rope to tie them with, the earth would go by the run, and all hands would be smothered. Fearful of this, they began to think, and enquire and calculate where the highest mountains were, and how to get at them and on them, so as to have some chance of escape from the threatened danger. Notwithstanding this forethought, they set to work to provide the needful, and succeeded in this way. Passing on the word to the tribes along the coast, some settlers at a very great distance were robbed of axes, saws, and rope, and tiers of dray wheels, all of which were forwarded on from tribe to tribe to the Old Gentleman on the other side; and, as was supposed, in time to prevent the capsize, for it never happened." Now, with all due respect to the memory of Buckley and to the worthy Lieutenant Morgan, we venture to question the foregoing. With such wondrous jealousy between tribes, with such marvellous ignorance of tribes contiguous to each other, we fancy some difficulties existed in the communication of the news of this interesting and almost tragical event, the means of restoring the balance, and getting from the settlers of the Sydney side, all along round the coast some nine hundred miles, the spoil of a wheelwrights shop.

As to crude religious conceptions, we will now present a few of those supposed to be acknowledged by the natives, merely observing again our scepticism of their authenticity for the singular want of traditional agreement among the tribes, or even among individuals of the same tribe. Mr. Eyre tells us that the Lower Murray Aborigines believe in a certain old man in the sky named Nooreele, who had several children without a mother, and who made a huge serpent, to whom great power was given. Mr. Parker speaks of a being called Bimbeal, and a devil or serpent named Mindi, with souls entering the bodies of crows and bats. Mr. Hull, J. P., in his interesting pamphlet published ten years ago, quotes information from Mr. Parker respecting the Loddon Blacks. These are supposed to recognise one Pundyil, who, a long time ago, cut a kangaroo into a great number of pieces, which, turning into kangaroos, filled the land. At the request of his daughter Karakarock, he told Gerer the sun to warm, and immediately the earth opened like a

Digitized by Google

door. At this burst of light, "plenty Blackfellow jump up, sing all the same Whitefellow." The said young lady was once walking upon this dull earth with a stick in her hand to kill snakes; giving a sharper blow than usual, the stick broke, and flame issued. This was the origin of fire. Mr. Hull also refers to the Yarra tribe giving names to two stars of Orion, and styling them father and mother. They believed the moon to be the husband of the sun, like our own ancestors the Anglo Saxons.

However disposed to be amused at the silly fancies of our rude natives, if we look at the popular belief of Christianized Englishmen in the Norman era, the laugh may be on the other side. Grave men wrote Latin treatises, in which appeared such refined ideas as,—that the world was flat, and 12,000 miles long by 6,000 broad; that the sun was red in the morning, because of the reflection of the fires of hell; that there were women near Babylon with long beards; that somewhere in Africa men carried their eyes in their breasts; that pepper was black from the fires of forests to drive away the serpents; and that in India gigantic ants dug gold, and sold it to merchants for young camels to eat. Even in the days of Shakespeare we have a learned man writing to disprove the Englishman's notion, that bears licked their cubs into shape; that elephants slept leaning against trees; that diamonds were softened by the blood of goats; that griffins existed; that moles had no eyes; that cinnamon, ginger, cloves and nutmeg grew on the same tree; and that the Basil insect propagated scorpions in the brains of man. The Royal Society of London wrote to a doctor in Java, to know if it were true that there was a tree near Sumatra that sank into the earth at a touch, that had a worm at its root, and that when dry, changed into stone.

DISEASES.

Upon the first visit of the Whites, the natives of Port Phillip were found to be a healthy, happy race—excepting upon the Murray, where Sturt observed the dreaded plague for vice. Proximity to tribes acquainted with the older settlement of New South Wales, may readlly account for the appearance of the Europeans' blight

Digitized by Google

upon that river. Alas! who is competent to describe the miseries following the introduction of that disease? Tribe after tribe disappears; men are enfeebled and degraded, seeking in drink a relief to their sufferings and self upbraidings; women are debased, wretched, barren; and as to the few children, Mr. Protector Thomas writes, "I have known helpless infants brought into the world literally rotten with this disease." Never shall we forget our sorrowful impressions at the spectacle of a Murray Aborigine dying from this loathesome complaint.

The introduction of drink among them has been the active agency of their physical as well as moral decline. What avail the legislature passing enactments that the person who gave the liquor should be fined, or that the publican lose his license, when such a thing as conviction was never heard of? When a native is intoxicated, he lies down, it may be, upon some damp and exposed situation, with an inflamed body; the consequence is, that pulmonary complaints are engendered. Doubtless, the practise of a partial civilization induces much disease. A man dresses for a while in warm garments, partakes of our food, and sleeps in a comfortable hut; after a time he goes again into the bush with his blanket, his grubs, and his open mia mia. A serious epidemic appears to have raged before Batman came in 1835. Diseases are regarded in some shadowy way to be connected with the illdoings of divers fairies, brownies or the like. But these are vague and impressionless ideas; else we should see them like others supplicate the spirits whose malignity they feared.

They have cures for many complaints which exhibit no small intelligence in the much despised Aborigines. Rheumatisms are relieved by shampooing, and inflamations by bleeding and by cold water applications; no female is bled. Wounds are covered with a plaster of mud and ashes. Flesh wounds heal with rapidity under their simple treatment. Dysentery is attacked by fomentations of the leaves of the native currant and other plants. Splints and bandages are employed in accidents. Venereal ulcers are sprinkled with alkaline wood ashes. For certain disorders the excrements of animals are rubbed over the head. Their doctors are old, experienced men, though not of the importance of the Indian

Digitized by Google

Medicine men. They have an odd fashion of relieving pain by sucking out from the part affected a piece of wood or bone, the cause of the suffering, and which is always exhibited to the patient; the charlatanism of some modern quacks is about as clumsy as this, but often equally efficacious upon believing minds. A description is given of the operation of the native physician upon an ague subject, which is interesting and suggestive. The woman was stripped of her blanket, and carried by two men to and fro over a fire. Then the doctor put a string round her waist, and holding the ends, gently pulled her toward him, repeating a charm. He then gazed earnestly in her face, catching her eye, still uttering a charm, to produce a magnetic influence. Going up to her, he began to employ friction on her body. Others came, and joined in the universal shampooing. Then catching her up, they rolled her in rugs, laid her before the fire, and left her to an undisturbed repose.

DEATH AND BURIAL.

We have on more than one occasion been present at the death of Australian Aborigines. Mingled with natural and genuine sorrow, there was some of the artificed character, as in the hired mourners of the Jews, &c., and the black craped concern of more modern days. We have witnessed a party of women thus sitting to mourn. With their heads shaven, like the American Indians, with pipe clay on their faces, and a weighty mass of that material on their heads, they leaned over one another, and expressed their feelings in a low musical chant, in deep spasmodic sobs, and in abundant crying; the tears making their way through the plaster, produced a ludicrous appearance of the face. Unprovided with civilized handkerchiefs, the ladies would relieve their features from the effects of natural discharges at the weeping season, by appliances in the shape of sticks or stones. Now and then they would take breath, resume their cheerfulness, have a chat and laugh, then compose their countenance, wail once more, and fall to at tear shedding. Occasionally the real sorrowers would throw hot ashes on their heads, scratch their faces, and otherwise draw blood. The men would cut their

Digitized by Google

beards, and put white paint upon their breasts. The camp was deserted upon a death. It is the practise never to allude, in any way, to the deceased one, nor mention his name. This has been foolishly set down to a want of feeling; it is rather a proof of deep feeling. We were present when a friend asked a woman after a certain person, not knowing that he was dead. The lubra laid her hand upon his arm, looked kindly in his face, and said in a plaintively reproachful tone, "Speak plenty low; no you say the like of that; Blackfellow plenty growl." When instances are related of mothers carrying about with them the remains of some beloved child, we may be sure that the natural affections at this time of sorrow are in full exercise with them as with us.

The forms of their burials varied according to circumstances and the tribe. When the ground was soft, the body was interred in a hole dug with sticks. Sometimes it was burnt, and the ashes preserved. On the Lower Murray it was placed on a wooden stage, and exposed after the fashion of the Parsees of India, and the Red Indians of Canada West. Some, again, thrust their relatives in a hollow tree or a wombat hole, or bound them among the branches. We were present at the funeral obsequies of a Murray visitor on the banks of the Torrens. The body was placed in a sitting position, after the manner of all the Indian tribes from Canada to Patagonia. The women remained to weep. The men, adorned with pipe clay, hurried their corpse to the sepulchre they had prepared. The tomb was not above four feet deep; branches of trees and old clothes were laid on the mound, and small fires made round about. A grand corrobory took place in the evening. Some speak of the Murray tribes extracting the entrails, and filling their place with green leaves. Upon examination of the caul fat, the evil work of a sorcerer was known by the appearance of a scar. Many of their graves are bounded by well cut trenches, after the fashion of the ancient Etruscans, to drain off the rain. Occasionally tents are constructed over the graves to preserve them from falling showers. We have seldom been so deeply interested as upon the occasion of a visit to the burial place of a tribe allied to the Murray natives, but at a distance of forty miles from the banks of the river. There were eight or nine rude edifices of reeds and brushwood, eight or

Digitized by Google

ten feet high, held together by several circuits of native twine. Under each dome were two or more grave mounds, covered with old rags, leaves, &c. There were walks between and around these mausoleums, which were kept clean by the tribe. Around the whole was an enclosure of sticks, plaited reeds, worn out garments, and string, to keep the cattle from intruding upon this cemetery. Mr. Hinkins relates a singular feature in the customs of the middle Murray tribes. A man had died while a number of his friends were absent on a hunting expedition. Upon their return, and hearing of the loss, they immediately attacked those who had remained behind, for no other reason than that they had let the man die while they were away.

LANGUAGE.

Humboldt has declared that "Language is the outward appearance of the intellect of nations." If so, the philosopher would not be disposed to place the Australians low in the order of humanity. Their language is rich in material, good in analogy and uniform in etymological structure. We pause not to enquire into the philological enigma; for, as says the Encyclopedia Metropolitana, "The Goths, the Saxons, the Greeks, the Latins, (and we would add. the Australians) in forming the schemes of conjugation were probably impelled by principles in the human mind, the very existence of which they hardly suspected." Mr. Ex Protector Parker remarks upon the number and variety of combinations, "slight variations in the affixes expressed important differences of meaning." There are many dialects among our Blacks. But this is readily explained by the unsocial nature of a hunter's life; his country is mapped out into detached territories for the sake of procuring a living, as among the American Indians, &c. In proportion to the consolidation of a people, so is the diminution of these dialects. Thus, in Timor there are forty; in savage Borneo, many hundreds; in Celebes, four; and in populous Java two dialects. Mr. Ex Protector Dredge wrote in 1841, "Tribes separated from each other by comparatively limited spaces, scarcely retain the means of common conversational intercourse." Again,

Digitized by Google

the custom of never repeating the name of a deceased friend, which may be the appellation of some common object, necessitates the creation of new forms of expression. Mr. Moorhouse, the excellent Protector of Aborigines in South Australia, thus sums up the points of grammatical similarity among the Australian dialects: "They have suffixes, or particles, added to the terminal parts of words, to express relation; dual forms of substantives, adjectives and pronouns; limited terms, being only five, for time, distance, and number; no sibilant, or hissing sounds; no articles; no auxiliary verb; no relative pronoun; no prepositions; no distinctions in gender; no distinct form of the verb to express the passive voice."

Almost all words end in vowels. There are five vowels, and sixteen consonants. There is a want of the c. f. j. s. x. or z. The persons and cases of nouns are expressed by inflexions at the end, formed by combining the pronoun with the word. Thus, according to Mr. Parker, we have *Lar*, house; lar-knak, my house; lar-kneu, your house; lar-knook, his or her house; lar-knak-e, in my house; lar-ye-knak, at my house. The following from the Murray dialect, will show the declension of nouns:—

	Nominative.	
Meru, man	Merakul, the two men	Mera, men
	Active Nominative.	
Merinnanna		
	Genitive.	
Merining	Merinnimakul	Merinnarango
	Dative.	
Merininnanno	Merinnakullamanno	Merinnaramanno
	Accusative.	
Meru	Merakul	Mera
	Ablative.	
Merinni, with	Merinnakullamanno	Merinnaramanno
Merinnainmudl, from	Merinnakullamammudl	Merinnaramainmudl

The adjective is thus compared on our northern boundary: *worpippi*, great; *worpippinni*, greater. The verbs are inflected by the prefixed pronoun. Thus, *Ngape terrin*, I stand; *ngurru terrin*, thou standest; *ninni terrin*, he stands. The Chinese have

Digitized by Google

similarly, Ngo Ngai, I love; Ni Ngai, thou lovest; Ta Ngai, he loves. Among the Murray pronouns are *Ngape*, I; *Ngurru*, thou; *Ngedlu*, we two; *Ngupul*, you two; *Ngennu*, we; *Ngunnu*, you; *Ninni*, he. Postfixes are employed for prepositions: thus, *ityarnungko*, from; *taiapparnalityarnungko*, from lips.

ORIGIN OF OUR NATIVES.

Consulting with Simon, the son of Jagga Jagga the friend of Batman, upon this abstruse subject, we obtained the following opinion: "Blackfellow always this country. No like whitefellow walk plenty, go new country." Mr. Moorhouse of Adelaide has a philological theory of their origin. Observing the singular uniformity of terms in various dialects for the two first persons, he supposes a party landing in North Australia, and separating in pairs. But it is very remarkable, that while the tribes of North and South Australia practise circumcision, those of Port Phillip and Eastern Australia are ignorant of the rite.

Certain caves have been discovered in various parts of the coast, on the walls of which remarkable figures are drawn. Flinders, King, and Grey saw these in North Australia. At Ryalstone, New South Wales, 40 miles from Mudgee, is a cave with the bottom paved. Among other impressions are those of a number of red hands; some with the fore finger cut off, others crossing one another. In one cave Grey found figures with red garments down to the ancles, and a sort of glory round their heads. Others have coloured bandages round their heads. Some women, also, are depicted with eyes but no mouths; one has a blue head dress. Among the tribes of ancient Egypt and the monuments of the ancient Peruvians and Mexicans the red cap and red hand are common, and evidently refer to some universally spread mystery—some lost freemasonry. With these sketches are those of kangaroos, snakes, fish, &c. At Cape Schank, Western Port, and at Cape Bridgewater, west of Portland, similar caves of ochre drawings are to be seen. All these indicate a different sort of people

Digitized by Google

from those now existing, unless the present race be a degenerate offspring of the others.

There is no record of a people raising themselves from barbarism; but isolation and removal from civilizing agencies, will soon reduce a community to a low condition of mind. Dr. Beke informs us, that, "The culture or degradation of our aboriginal race will be in proportion to the geographical distance of its residence from the common centre of its dispersion." If so, our dark friends must have come a long way from home. Philological affinities have been noticed between the Australian dialects and those of both Chinese and Malays. There is little doubt that our Aborigines crossed the sea of Torres Strait, as the neighbouring islanders have similar appearance, and customs, with our aborigines.

CONFLICTS OF WHITES AND BLACKS.

With their jealousy at the least intrusion upon their hunting grounds by a neighbouring tribe, we cannot believe the Port Phillip Blacks regarded our coming with complacency, and the occupation of their country by our flocks with satisfaction. The truth is, their conduct towards us in our weakness was most generous and praiseworthy. And although isolated instances of ruthless attack occurred at an early period, with no obviously apparent causes for such, yet we should be cautious of condemning a people with whose language and motives we were then so ignorant, particularly with the knowledge of highly exciting reasons of complaint on other occasions. Mr. Eyre, late Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, and an able authority upon any question respecting the Aborigines of New Holland, has well observed, "Our being in their country at all is, so far as their ideas of right and wrong are concerned, altogether an act of intrusion and aggression."

The conflicts between the Whites and Blacks of Port Phillip, have not been so bloody and constant as in the neighbouring colony of Tasmania. Our natives were a gentler race than the curly-headed Islanders. Still a sad tale is to be told of aggressions and murders in the olden times. If the settlers can tell of stolen sheep

Digitized by Google

and slaughtered shepherds, the natives can also rehearse a tale of seduction and murder. Mr. Protector Robinson assures us that "Nine-tenths of the mischief charged to the Aborigines is the result of the white man's interference with the native women." The first murder by the Aborigines of Port Phillip had its origin in this cause,—interference with their females. Two shepherds belonging to the Port Phillip Association, had been sent down in the early part of 1836, to Mr. Batman's first station on Indented Head. They were murdered upon their return. One of them had been wounded by the natives of Van Diemen's Land, and bore a deadly hatred against all Blacks. Another shepherd about this time bound a native girl to a tree to secure her while he was away with his flock. Contriving to escape, the poor thing fled to Buckley for protection. He told Mr. Gellibrand, who immediately sent the rough rascal back to Van Diemen's Land.

The next attack was an unaccountable one. Mr. Franks, formerly of Green Ponds, in Tasmania, had settled near Mr. Cotterill. Always kind to the Aborigines, he had no fear of aggression. Some callers at the homestead discovered the gentleman and James Smith, his overseer, lying quite dead, and the premises rifled of their contents. According to Mr. Connell, four gentlemen accompanied Mr. Gellibrand to ascertain the truth of the report. The remains of the men were brought to town and interred on Burial Hill, the little enclosure near the Flagstaff. An organised party under Dr. Cotter, with Billiang and some of Batman's Sydney natives, set off in hostile pursuit. They soon came on to the track of the murderers. They approached a place where a lubra's grub stick was picked up and recognised. The end of the story will be best told in the words of Old Goslyn, the octagenarian, "They let fly at them, killed a a great many, and what was not killed and wounded ran away, leaving all behind them; a dray was loaded with what they had carried away, and their spears and waddies and tomahawks."

The natives were not without their tales of wrongs. The following quotation from the Sydney *Government Gazette*, confirms this statement:—"Whereas, it has come to the knowledge of the Government, that on the night of the 23rd of February last, a party of six or more armed Europeans, surprised a number of

Digitized by Google

Aboriginal Natives, sleeping in a tea tree scrub, in the immediate vicinity of the station of Messrs. Smith & Osbry, in the Portland Bay district; and then and there barbarously murdered three aboriginal females and one male child, by gun or pistol shots, besides wounding a fourth female. It is hereby notified," &c. Many of the Stock-keepers and Shepherds were from Van Diemen's Land, and had, in many cases, shed the blood of the poor Tasmanians. They were not indisposed to regard the shooting of all Blackfellows as pleasant and proper sport. The late Protector, Mr. Dredge, thus records an atrocity:—"To one has been given the carcase of a dead lamb, which he forthwith proceeds to roast for himself and his two lubras; while the operation is going on, he seats himself by the fire with one of his women, while the donor sits opposite with the musket in his hand; in an unsuspecting moment he shoots the black man, and with the butt end of his piece knocks out the brains of the woman and the helpless infant at her breast. The other woman, gathering firewood at a little distance, escapes by flight. The bodies of the others are then burnt to prevent detection." According to Mr. Parker, in July 1838, Mr. Bowman's party of the Pyrenees were said to have killed fourteen persons. Bowman's servants were tried for burning the bodies of the slain, to conceal their cruelty; they were acquitted for want of white evidence.

Robberies of sheep were common enough in remote districts. The natives doubtless believed that they had a right to a few of the white man's woolly kangaroo that fed on their pastures, and destroyed their roots. A favourite place of retreat on these forays was the celebrated basaltic Stony Rises. The dogs of the Natives were destructive to the flocks. Dr. Thomson acted wisely when he went to Geelong harbour in 1837. He got Buckley to gather the tribe to receive beef and blankets, and explain his intention to act well to them, if they would do so to him. The result was, that he never suffered molestation or loss. It was far different elsewhere. The settlers were in constant and harassing fear. The lordly and luxuriant Squatters of the present day endured years of privation, anxiety, and suffering to maintain their ground, and open up a country to succeeding generations. Whole flocks were carried off,

Digitized by Google

out-stations robbed of stores, shepherds speared, and servants so frightened as to be unable to discharge their duties. The Squatters in their meetings condemned the Protectorate, and recommended the establishment of Land Reserves and Provision Depots for the Blacks, and the formation of Missions among them. The Government was feeble and distant, and Gazette proclamations were ill supported by Police arrangements, for protection either for Blacks or Whites.

But the times are changed. We are the many; they are the few. We have remorselessly occupied the whole of their territory, and they wander as intruders and strangers.

NATIVE RIGHTS AND BRITISH RULE.

The Aborigines were held by our government to have no proprietorship in the soil; and yet, Mr. Eyre writes, "Each male has some portion of land of which he can point out the boundaries. A female never inherits." Governor Gawler, speaking of the land, says, "over which these Aborigines have exercised distinct, defined and absolute right of proprietary and hereditary possession." Dr. Lang adds, "Particular sections and portions of these districts are universally recognized by the natives as the property of the individual members of these tribes." Mr. Protector Parker asserts, "Every family had its own locality." Dr. Thomson told the Sydney Council, that the native "considers the land as his own: indeed every family had its separate portion."

The anomalous condition of the Blacks under our rule is thus described by Count Strzelecki. "The late act declaring them naturalized as British subjects, has not only rendered them legally amenable to the English criminal law, but added one more anomaly to all the other enactments affecting them. This naturalization excludes them from sitting on a jury, or appearing as witnesses, and entails a most confused form of judicial proceedings; all which, taken together, has made of the Aborigines of Australia a nondescript caste, who, to use their own phraseology, are neither white nor black." The New South Wales legislature passed a law

Digitized by Google

in 1839 to admit native evidence; but this was disallowed by the home authorities; in 1844, the council were opposed to the admission. Mr. Protector Robinson has properly observed, "The legal disabilities of the Aborigines have been a serious obstacle to their protection and civilization." At the trial of Bon Jon in 1841, for murdering another native, the Judge exclaimed, "Can I legally exercise my jurisdiction with reference to any crime committed by the Aborigines against each other? Mr. Barry, now one of our judges, contended that the Crown had no power to limit authority of natives to decide among themselves. Mr. Croke asserted that the Sydney judges considered the natives to be amenable to the laws brought out by the colonists. Judge Willis decided, "There is no express law which makes Aborigines subject to our colonial code."

PROTECTORS AND NATIVE POLICE.

The investigations of a House of Commons' Committee upon the Aborigines originated the formation of the Port Phillip Protectorate of the Aborigines. The benevolent Lord Glenelg, then Secretary of the Colonies, announced this institution to Governor Gipps on January 31, 1838. Mr. George Robinson, who had been so successful in gathering in the remnant of the hunted Tasmanians, was appointed Chief Protector, at a salary of £500 a-year. Originally a mechanic of Hobart Town, with little education, but great benevolence and pious zeal, he had lived much with the Blacks, learned their language, gained their confidence, and so conciliated the infuriated and decimated tribes. His Assistants in the Protectorate were the following persons, sent from England; Messrs. Sievwright, Dredge, Thomas and Parker. Mr. Le Soeuf was afterwards nominated Assistant Protector. These received £250 salary, and 10s. 6d. a-day for expenses.

From the first, nothing but disappointment and dissatisfaction attended the course of these gentlemen. The colonists as a mass were violently opposed to their proceedings, and the government

Digitized by Google

afforded them little sympathy; but there can be no doubt that though the natives made no further progress in civilization, they were at least preserved from the violence of cruel men, and the property of the squatter became safer.

The employment of the natives for Police was first suggested by Captain Lonsdale, who in 1836 recommended Captain Machonochie's plan. A corps was formed in 1839, under a gentleman named Villiers. The discipline was bad, the leader was dismissed, and his men bolted to the bush. Captain Dana had 24 natives under his command in 1842, in a thorough soldier-like condition. Half the expenses of this establishment came out of the Aboriginal fund; the cost in four years was £55,000. Many saw with apprehension the arming of one portion of natives against the others, knowing how the deadly animosity and revenge of a tribe may thus be gratified under the shelter of the law. Thus we read of one charge of theirs upon a tribe for the murder of a native girl, "It is probable that the murdered child was revenged 17 to 1; for a native policeman counted upon his fingers by the evening fire the number each of them had killed, and they amounted to 17."

SKETCHES OF NATIVE CHARACTER.

The man Weatherly, of the earliest days of the colony, was one of five brothers. He had two wives, Big Mary and Eliza. The three managed to live on most friendly terms. But Mary, or Mrs. Weatherly, as she preferred being called, was an excellent washerwoman. Her husband for a long period worked for Mr. Overton in Melbourne, and was duly paid for his labor. The man was of a mild, affectionate disposition, at all times a favorite with Whites and Blacks. Happening one day to sit down near the hole of a snake, on the site of the South Yarra Barracks, he received a bite, which occasioned his death in a few hours.

Doutta Galla was the wife of the youngest of the celebrated Jagga Jagga brothers. Her pretty little child was named Lucy by Mr. Batman, after a fair daughter of his own. She was of a powerful frame, masculine spirit, and hasty temper. Merri

Digitized by Google

Denninook, an old chieftain with four wives, was a great friend of the Whites in their hour of weakness. Captain Benbow, of a peculiarly mild and pleasing expression, was also a noble apologist and defender of his European acquaintance.

Some dozen years ago there was a great outcry about a White woman being seen captive with a Gipps Land tribe. By stratagem the chieftain was seized and brought to Melbourne, in hopes of getting information from him. Confined in goal, Bungulene soon became sick and died. His widow and two sons were removed to the Baptist Mission on Merri Creek. There, after a time, the lady was married again, and that in due christian form, by the Rev. W. Ramsey. When the school was broken up, the children were transferred to the care of Mr. Hinkins of Moonie Ponds, with whom one of them may be still seen.

We had an interesting account from Donald Kennedy, Esq., M.L.C., of an old man of a tribe near his station. Claiming the honours of chieftainship, he was regularly supplied with rations, and appointed to occasional honorable employments about the place. He was particularly exemplary in his conduct, and scrupulously attentive to the interests of the master; any irregularities observed in the behaviour of the servants were in the most dignified manner reported to head quarters. Esteeming himself something better than common Blackfellow, he never bemeaned himself by drinking with the men of the establishment in their hut; though he was not indifferent to a glass, provided it was handed to him by Mr. Kennedy in the house, so that he might drink "like a gentleman." His wife was a clean, orderly, good soul, remarkably solicitous to keep her husband in proper trim, as he never presumed to go up to the house until he had changed his dress, shaved himself, and put on a clean shirt. When Mary had finished her morning work, she would clap on her best gown, and walk up to sit with her mistress in the parlour. When the worthy Mayor of Geelong, Dr. Thomson, sojourned on the site of the second Metropolis of the West, his lady received a visit from a fine looking native woman. Thinking to improve her appearance by the gift of a gay gown and cap, Mrs. Thomson found the clothing added no new charm. A day or two

Digitized by Google

after, the lubra renewed her call, but in her former garb of opossum skin. Strange to say, however, her old man appeared at the door with the said dress dangling about his legs, and his bushy, black beard obtruding among the frills of the muslin head gear.

CIVILIZATION AND DECLINE.

We have a sad story to tell when we speak of the effect of our so-called civilization upon the aborigines. Mr. Westgarth truly remarked, "They have neither the desire nor the capacity to associate with the Whites." Even if able and willing to be influenced by our civilization, is it generally believed that they would have become either happier or more moral? Mr. Threlkeld may well tell us, "The frightful mortality among them weighed down the spirit of the Wesleyan Missionaries of Port Phillip." By the time the youth and adult were taught to read, the scroll of eternity was unrolled before them. We taught them to handle the spade, but it was to dig their graves. Count Strzlecki declares them to be "Spectres of the past." To adopt our habits, they must be entirely removed from the associations of the Mia Mia. And what have we to offer in exchange for endearing relations, joyous freedom, and unanxious existence? The man is thrust upon a competition society to earn his bread. He is exposed to the gibes and contempt of the lowest of our countrymen. He is without sympathy and friends. He is herded with men from whom he learns the most obviously developed principles of European civilization,—swearing and drinking. It is true he eats better food, wears better clothing, sleeps in better dwellings. But where is his home? Who will be his mother, his sister, his brother? Who will ally herself as wife to his dark skin? Can he ever know the sweetness of a child's love? No! he soon tires of our work, our food, our confined habitations, our heartless ridicule; and hastens back to his camp fire to find a friend, to feel himself a man, to dwell with those who can love him.

Digitized by Google

The decline of this unfortunate race is a mournfully interesting fact. We have no record of their numbers upon the arrival of the Whites; but of the many thousands not two thousand survive, most of which are on the Murray. Other tribes have almost wholly disappeared. It is no satisfaction to be told by Pritchard, the ethnologist, that "It may happen that in the course of another century, the aboriginal natives of most parts of the world will have ceased entirely to exist." In 1845, our Colonial Council appointed a Committee to enquire into the causes of the decline of our Aboriginal population. Among those examined was old Mahroot, the last man of the Port Jackson tribe. His answer was this—"Because they knock about like the deuce in liquor, and no children because they go with a good many white men." A volume could not give a better reply.

One evening, when visiting the Ballaarat Gold Fields, some three or four years ago, we saw a party of natives plied with drink by Englishmen, until their bestial manners and coarse speech excited the brutal mirth of their cruel temptors. Throughout the night the Bush was disturbed with the mad yells and quarrels of the poor creatures. Early in the morning we rose to ascertain the cause of moaning at no great distance. To our horror, there lay before us a wretched man in the mud, with nothing upon him but a shirt, thoroughly drenched with a night of cold wintry rain. While his limbs shook with the inclemency of the weather, his brow was wet with the sweat of agony. In answer to questions, he groaned out, "Me killed---Long Tom did it---him drunk---him stab me knife." Lifting his shirt, we beheld a large gash in his side, out of which part of his bowels were protruding, and mingling with the grit of the muddy soil. The Doctor arrived, and pronounced the case hopeless---the poor fellow, must die. Christian men of Victoria! who was the murderer?

Why should the Black race pass away? There was no apparent diminution of physical force, moral power, mental activity. The signs of their decrepitude suddenly fall upon them as the curtain of night in the Tropics. With diseased frames, with hopeless feelings, homeless and childless, the present generation will soon

Digitized by Google

glide away from us. Like the leaves of an English autumn, they wither and fall; but, alas! there is no Spring for them. The Sheoak hangs its mournful, weird-like appendages over their tombs; and on its knotted, leafless strings, the passing breezes play their solemn requium.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

GEOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

G. Robertson, Publisher. 4s. cloth.

Sanctioned in the Schools of the National and Denominational School Boards of Victoria.

"We anticipate that Bonwick's Geography will be a household word in these Colonies."—*Melbourne Argus.*

"Precisely the kind of Manual that has long been wanted."—*Melbourne Age.*

"Mr. Bonwick's book offers a concise but comprehensive view of the whole of the facts as yet known concerning these colonies."—*Sydney Empire.*

"From what we know of Mr. Bonwick's antecedents, he is the person best adapted to prepare such a work."—*Sydney Freeman's Journal.*

"The colonists in this hemisphere are greatly indebted to Mr. Bonwick for his indefatigable spirit and assiduous labours, of which this volume is the result."—*Launceston Examiner.*

GRAMMAR FOR AUSTRALIAN YOUTH.

Revised and sanctioned by the Inspector of Schools, South Australia.

READER FOR AUSTRALIAN YOUTH.

"Undoubtedly one of Mr. Bonwick's best productions.—*Sydney Empire.*

MAP OF VICTORIA.

Delineating roads and indicating geological features of places. 6s.

DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT OF PORT PHILLIP.—6s.

"Future historians will turn to it as a repository of valuable facts, lucidly, systematically, and chronologically stated; for the most part well authenticated, and all of them of the deepest interest, because bearing upon the infancy and rapidly maturing youth of a country whose splendid destinies have yet to be revealed, and whose future greatness may transcend both our hopes and our belief."—*Melbourne Argus.*

Digitized by Google

THE BUSHRANGERS:

ILLUSTRATING THE EARLY DAYS OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.—3s. cloth.

"In spite of the name, and the numerous deeds of blood that it suggests to the memory, the book is by no means a mere Newgate Calendar, but something infinitely better. It exhibits a correct position of the state of society in earlier days, and makes our present condition much more appreciable."—*Hobart Town Colonial Times.*

GEOGRAPHY FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS.

An introduction to Geography, commencing at the Australian Home; with a map of the Australian colonies. 1s.

GRAMMAR FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS:

A familiar introduction to a difficult subject. 6d.

In the Press:—

HOW DOES A TREE GROW?

An Easy Botany for Young Australians. 1s.

EARLY DAYS OF MELBOURNE:

A Colonial History for Young Australians. 1s.

Preparing for Publication:—

A continued Series of Works adapted to the Youth of these Colonies, entitled,

"SHILLING LIBRARY FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS."

These little volumes, each complete in itself, will contain subjects of local interest; as. *Early Days of Sydney, Adelaide, and Hobart Town—The Aborigines of Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania—Heroes of Australian Discovery—Geological Walks in Australia—Natural History, &c., &c.*

Goodall & Demaine, Printers, 29, Market Street, Melbourne.

Digitized by Google